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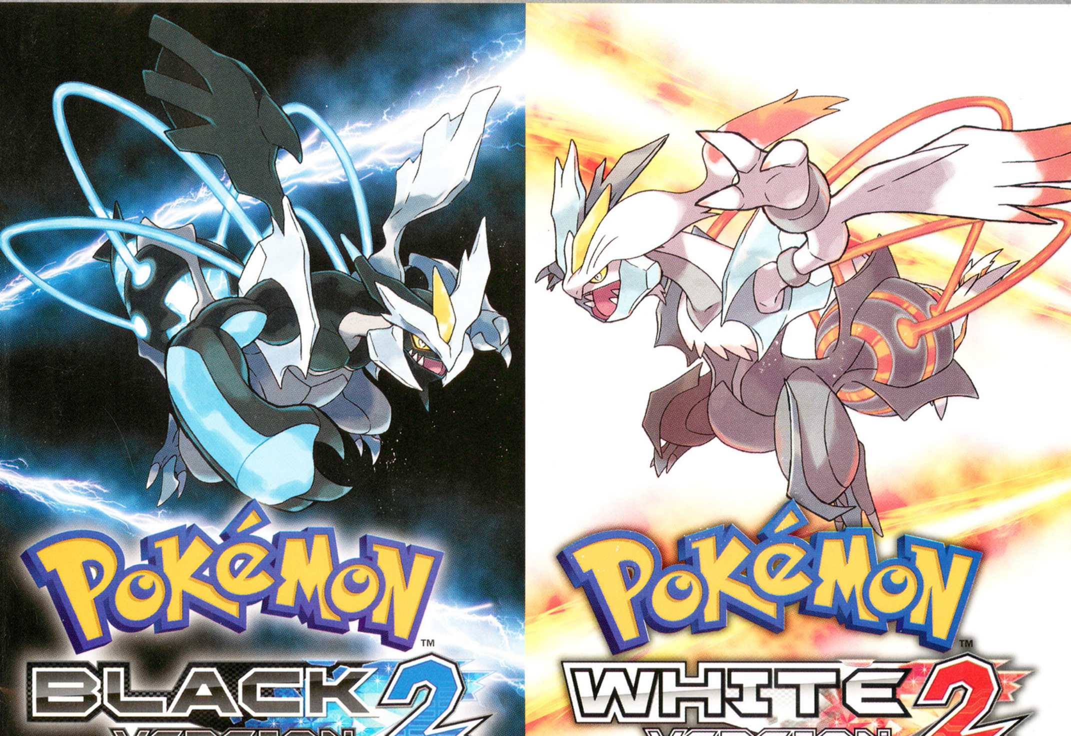

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Black (and White) to the Future 48

Return to the Unova region for a brand-new adventure in Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2.

By Land, Sea, and Air 58

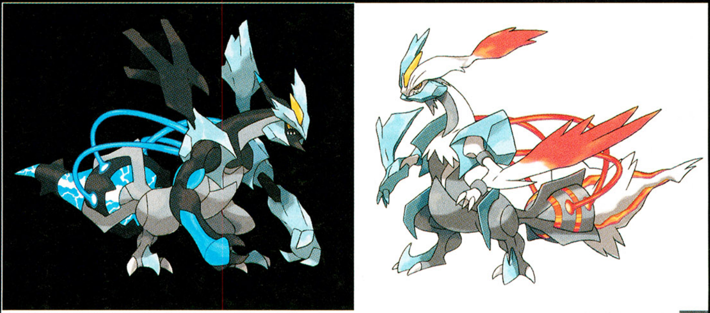
Sonic and All-Stars Racing Transformed mixes multiple modes of transportation with a heaping helping of Sega goodness on Wii U.

How to Become a Gentleman 64

We don't wish to imply that our readers are undignified, but everyone can use an extra dash of class. Learn to better yourself with Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask for Nintendo 3DS. Quite right!

Betrayal Is a Virtue 70

Virtue's Last Reward presents you with life and death choices on Nintendo 3DS. Find out why you don't want to miss this follow-up to cult hit Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors.



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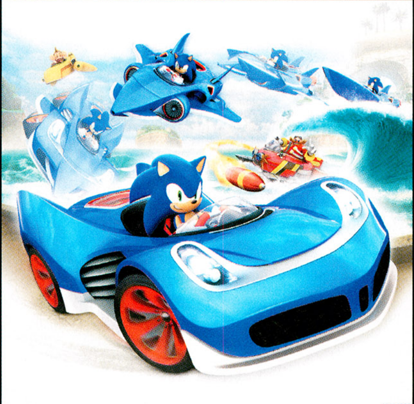

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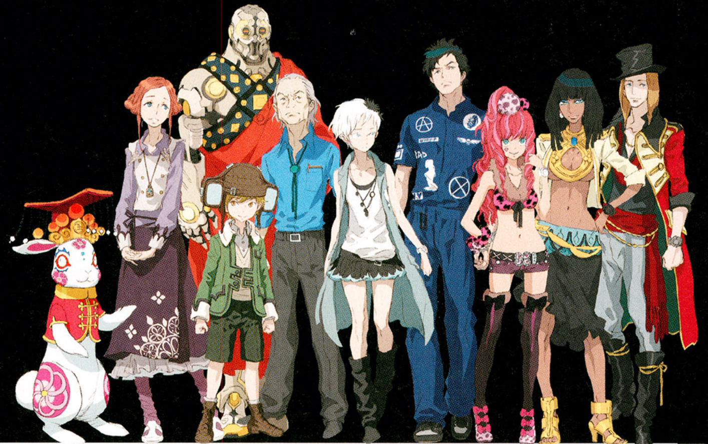

ZERO ESCAPE: VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD 70

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DW = DSiWARE
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
Wii U = Wii U

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Pulse

A New Digital Direction

Chris Slate

The release of New Super Mario Bros. 2 was a major milestone in the history of Nintendo gaming, and not because it gave the world another top-notch Mario platformer. The game was most significant in that it launched Nintendo's aggressive new plan to release its retail games as digital downloads on the same day boxed copies hit stores, a strategy that will carry over to the Wii U console. That's a bold, industry-leading move for a company that only recently started to take significant steps into the digital arena. It poses weighty questions regarding issues such as the potential impact of digital sales on retail outlets, but the question that matters the most to each of *us*, I think, is simply this: should you buy digital or boxed?

Each has its advantages. I enjoy the tangible quality of physical media: having a box to retire to a shelf once I've beaten a game. Also, a Game Card is effortlessly transferrable from system to system—I can even loan it to a friend. On the other hand, having to carry around a bag full of games stinks. I've come to expect a mobile device to store my software so that it's always at my fingertips.

Still, I plan to stick with boxed games for now. Maybe I'm just old-fashioned. No matter which way you choose, I think we can all agree that having a choice is a very good thing.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

REVIEWED: KINGDOM HEARTS 3D
Is this summer's must-have Nintendo 3DS game? Find out on page 78
NINTENDO POWER
EXCLUSIVE
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Future

V281 AUGUST 2012

This is The Hoff here, hoping you've had a great summer and are getting ready for fall. School is already back in session in some places, which brings us to this month's special letter request: What video game character would you like to have as your teacher, and what would you want to learn from him or her? Send your responses to the address on page 8.

LETTERS

Saddle Up!

NP, I need your help in settling a feud that began between me and my friend Abby during a recent trip to the Nintendo World Store. The red appendage on each and every Yoshi's back—is it a shell, or is it a saddle? I'm of the "saddle" party—please help! —**MACKENZIE**

In the Super Mario History Booklet included with Super Mario All-Stars for Wii, Super Mario World main director Takashi Tezuka stated, "Yoshi was originally supposed to be a type of Koopa. That saddle you see on his back was actually his shell." Hopefully that settles the debate!

Get into the Groove

I've been curious about Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure ever since I read about it in your magazine. When I got the game, I was absolutely blown away! The graphics are sublime, the music is catchy, and it has an actual story, not to mention some humor as well! The only thing I don't like (and I mean the *only* thing) is the harsh scoring system. —**ACE**

We're glad you decided to check out Rhythm Thief! We agree; it's a pretty special experience. Don't believe it? Then download the demo from the Nintendo eShop and see for yourself!

Tough Talker

I'm confused. In Star Power in Vol. 280, Link's quote was "Come on!" from The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker for the GameCube. It was my belief that Link is a silent protagonist, and although I have not yet played The Wind Waker, in all of the Zelda games I have played (including Spirit Tracks, which Toon Link is also in), Link never said a word. Is there an explanation, or are you just going to tell me to play the game? —**AMAZING TATER**

Considering Link's limited canonical vocabulary, "Come on!" was pretty much our only choice for his quote; he says it to another character who accompanies him for a brief duration in The Wind Waker. By the way, the game is awesome and you should play it.

Dress Code

I know you're not exactly having fans line up to tell you this (especially male ones), but I'd like to thank you for that, ahem, tasteful placement of the title of your Code of Princess article. Why a princess would wield a hundred-pound sword while wearing only two-ounce armor with no undergarments is just as beyond me as it is beyond you. What's gonna happen if she cuts herself? —**KATE V.**

We suspect the sword is so bulky that Princess Solange doesn't have the strength to wield it and wear heavy armor at the same time. Yeah...that must be it.

I'm glad that there will be a special anniversary Kirby collection for Wii. I've been playing Kirby for years, and now I get to remember the past games I've enjoyed. The Kirby series is totally underrated. It's time people start to enjoy the manly pink puffball that is the amazing Kirby. **—CAMPBELL P.**

A Pink to the Past

Kirby is turning 20 this year! Relive some of his greatest moments with Kirby's Dream Collection: Special Edition for Wii.

Kirby's Dream Land

Suck It Up

The Birth of a Legend

Familiar Faces

Do the Robot

In your Destination: 1987 article you guys mentioned great games like Pro Wrestling, The Legend of Zelda, Kid Icarus, Metroid, and Punch-Out!!, but I couldn't help but notice that you missed a character that revolutionized the NES—the Blue Bomber, Mega Man. I figure it's worth mentioning because of all the great sequels, spin-offs, and fans the series has. **—SYNCHRO**

Oh, don't think that we've forgotten Mega Man. That article was simply focusing on the breakout Nintendo-created titles of 1987, not third-party games.

U Know It

I'm worried about the way Ubisoft is following the Nintendo tradition of including the system's name in the game's name with ZombiU, and the precedent it sets. What if we get The Legend of ZeldU or Super MariU Bros.? U-Zero, or Uigi's Mansion? Unless we get Beyond Good & Uvil I will never forgive them. **—JEREMY S.**

Alone in the Park

I have had a question since I read your preview about Nintendo Land in Vol. 281. Can you play games like Zelda Battle Quest and Luigi's Ghost Mansion single-player? **—SHINOBI**

Nintendo hasn't divulged the full scope of Nintendo Land as of press time, but they assure us that we've seen only a small fraction of what will be in the final game.

Tanooki Troubles

In the New Super Mario Bros. 2 article in Vol. 280, I saw something odd. While talking about the Tanooki Suit you said that you hold the jump button to glide. That's not true. In Super Mario Bros. 3 you have to tap the jump button in midair to glide. (I remember these things since I'm a Mario nerd.) **—CALLUM K.**

You are correct; you don't hold down the button to glide in Super Mario Bros. 3 (although you do hold it down to glide as Raccoon Mario in New Super Mario Bros. 2). We apologize for the error and will be launching the article's author into space at the earliest opportunity.

Axe Nicely

I gotta know: was the mention of a female Abraham Lincoln in the Scribblenauts Unlimited article a deliberate reference to Axe Cop? Please don't chop my head off for asking. **—LEWANUT**

Deliberate? No. Subconscious? Very possibly.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

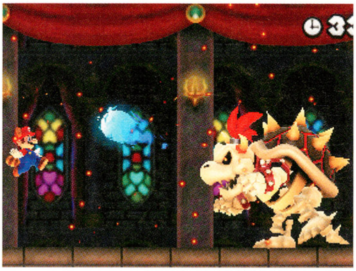
Hoff, how would you feel...*if I cloned you*!? I have recently received some DNA from hair that was shock-waved off of your head as Slate made an impact back from space. I was then thinking about making another Hoff to accompany me in taking over the world!!! But before I enslave the entire human race, I wanted to ask your permission to copy some of your incredible power. By the way, could you, ah, send Slate back into space?? **—HARLAND K.**

The Hoff says: Oh, for pity's sake, not another cloning experiment. I can't tell you how many times this has happened, and it always ends poorly. Liquid Hoff, Zombie Hoff, Sonic the Hedgehoff, Sephihoff, Hofftimus Prime... the list of failed clones goes on and on, and they seem to get more ornery with each passing month. And for the record, that whole thing about Slate falling through the atmosphere to save me from Kirby was hypothetical. He's still floating overhead; don't you worry.

Unkillable Koopa King

Have you ever noticed how Bowser never dies? I decided to replay Super Mario Galaxy's final Bowser battle. I saw how Bowser fell into his (on fire) galaxy. He came back perfectly fine for the cut-scene afterward. I then thought back to Super Mario Bros. and remembered perfectly that Bowser fell into the lava in World 8-4. He was in Super Mario Bros. 3! Please explain this to me! **—LIBRA904**

It's true; Bowser always comes back, even when all his flesh is burned off and he's reduced to a skeleton. The dude must have fantastic health insurance. But that's fine with us. We wouldn't want Mario's life to get boring, after all.



Nintendo needs to make another four-player Zelda game similar to Four Swords Adventures. Imagine transitioning from the big screen to the Wii U GamePad and using the motion controls of Skyward Sword.
—**KILLERK**

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How would you like developers to use the features of Wii U?

I would like to see developers take advantage of the Wii U console's video-chat capabilities provided by the built-in camera. Players could interact with characters in Wii U games using the microphone, as well as video chat. It would be amazing to play a game where you had to directly answer a question via the Wii U GamePad microphone and/or camera. —**CHRIS G.**

I recently played the demo of Heroes of Ruin for the N3DS. I loved the co-op features and the overall production quality. Then I began thinking about the possibilities on Wii U. If Wii U is compatible with two GamePad controllers simultaneously, two people could play an action-RPG together without split-screen. The TV could display universal information like a map or quest info, while the actual action could take place on each player's GamePad. Local action-RPG multiplayer couldn't get any better! —**DANIEL**

I would like to see developers make a new Pokémon Snap! The Wii U GamePad is absolutely perfect for it! The screen could act as the viewfinder, naturally, while the shoulder buttons could let you zoom in and out. The microphone could let you speak to get a Pokémon's attention (such as make it face your way or startle it to have it move) or, in some cases, you'd need to keep quiet to not startle any! Your best pictures could be shared via Miiverse, while the touch screen can let you edit your pictures, such as adding captions, etc. And finally, to incorporate motion control, tilt the GamePad to shoot in portrait, landscape, or at an angle! —**MJV**

I would like to see games that use your, your family's, and your friend's likenesses, sort of like Face Raiders for N3DS. How about a zombie game where your family and friends appear as random zombies and if you kill them you'll get bonus points/awards?
—**BATTLE BULL**

I think it would be awesome if they would use the touch screen on the Wii U controller to execute special attacks in the upcoming Super Smash Bros game. It would be pretty cool flinging one of Samus's plasma grenades from the GamePad onto the screen!
—**HYRULE'S RECKONING**

I think that it would be really neat if there was an Okami game for Wii U. The player would use the TV screen for character movement and all that jazz, while you would use the GamePad screen to draw the symbols. I loved Okamiden on DS, and another Okami would be awesome! —**DR. FRANKEN**

I'd like to see the Wii U touch screen in a swordplay game in which the A Button would unleash a swipe, but touching a part of the opponent's body (which is displayed onscreen) would direct an attack on that specific part, allowing for more complex combos and deeper gameplay.
—**PRINCESS ROSEBUD**

I would like to see the developers use the Wii U system's unique features in a soccer game. The player would place the Wii U GamePad on the floor and kick over it using near-field communication. There could be a small sensor that goes on the player's foot so it can communicate with the GamePad.
—**FISH DUDE**

PLEASE WRITE US

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Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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The SCORE

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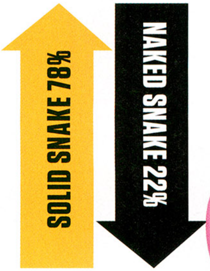
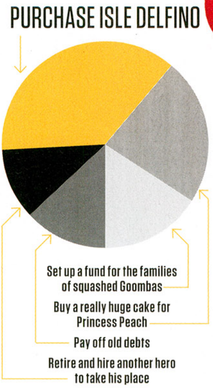


DO YOU WANT TO GET A NINTENDO 3DS XL SYSTEM?

MAYBE. I ALREADY HAVE A REGULAR NINTENDO 3DS.	47%
NO.	32%
YES!	21%

WHAT DO YOU IMAGINE MARIO IS GOING TO DO WITH ALL THE GOLD COINS HE COLLECTS IN NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2?



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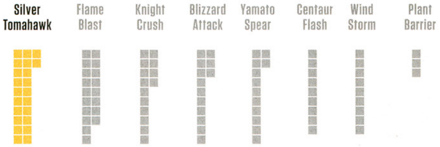
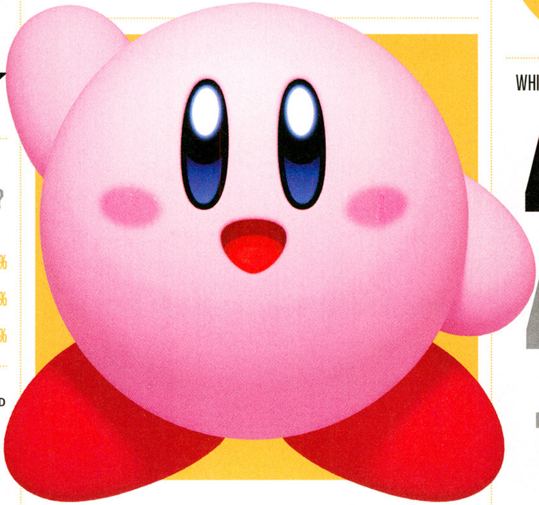


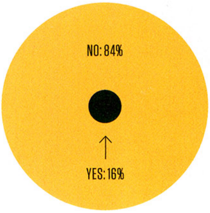


WHICH GAME IN KIRBY'S DREAM COLLECTION: SPECIAL EDITION ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

KIRBY 64: THE CRYSTAL SHARDS

Kirby 64: The Crystal Shards 44% • Kirby Super Star 23%
Kirby's Adventure 10% • Kirby's Dream Land 3 10%
Kirby's Dream Land 8% • Kirby's Dream Land 2 5%

HAVE YOU CONQUERED THE SECOND QUEST IN THE LEGEND OF ZELDA?



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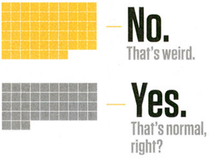

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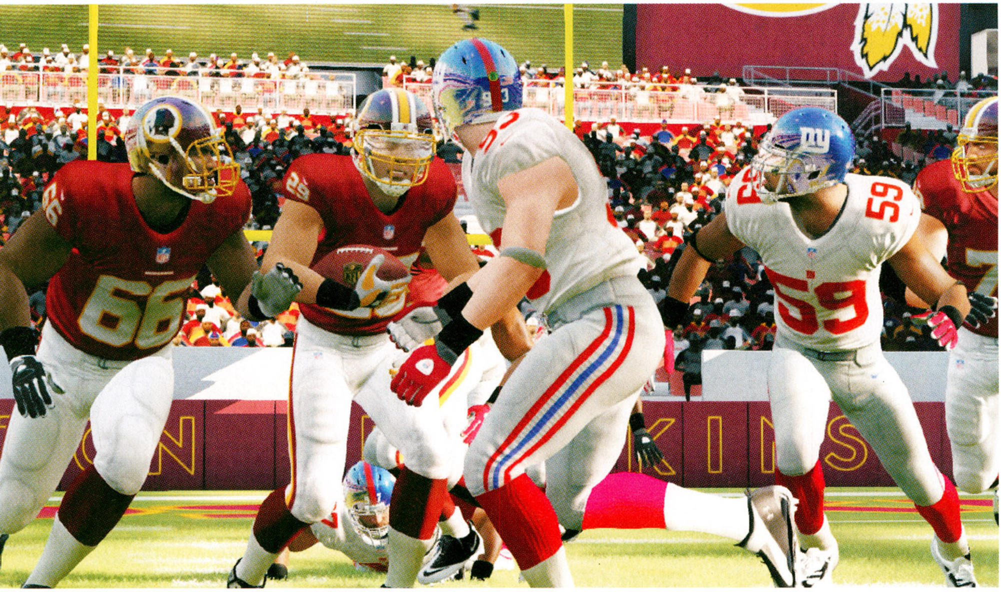
POWER UP



Wii U Ready for Some Football

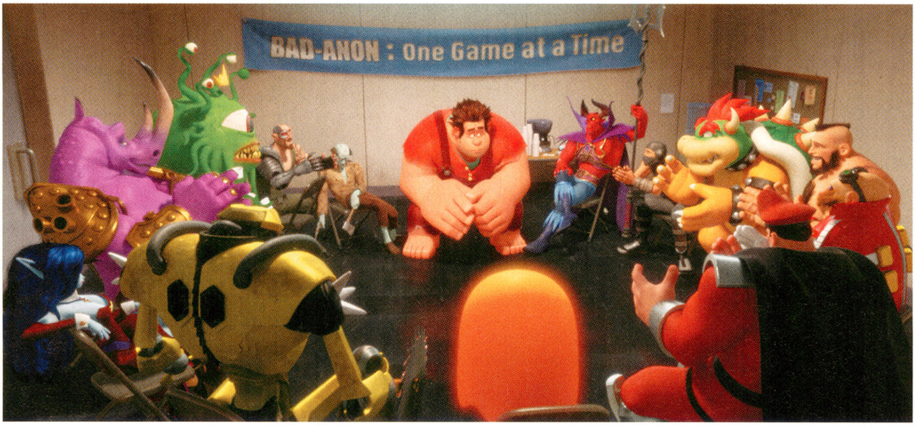
Nintendo's upcoming console gets a hardcore version of Madden NFL 13 at launch.

IT'S BEEN ONE of the worst-kept secrets in all of gaming, but EA Sports finally confirmed that Madden NFL 13 is heading to the Wii U console and will launch alongside the system later this year. The big news is that it will offer an ultra-realistic simulation of America's most popular sport, unlike the versions on Wii that tried to appeal to a more casual audience.

That means near-photorealistic visuals (as you can see in the screen above), a broadcast-style presentation, an in-depth franchise mode, and a full complement of online features—including 32-person leagues. The game will also take advantage of the Wii U GamePad in some cool ways. The playbook has been completely redesigned to take advantage of the touch screen, allowing you to more quickly navigate different formations and packages. And when you get to the line of scrimmage, you can make substitutions by simply tapping a positional icon on the touch screen then swiping through the eligible players. The touch screen can also be used to draw new routes for your receivers on offense and to change assignments on defense (in either zone or man-to-man coverage). By smoothing out some historically rough elements of Madden's interface, these Wii U-exclusive features should allow players to pay greater attention to the strategic considerations of football, which are so vital to success in the real sport.

One bit of bad news: the Wii U version of the game won't include the new Infinity Engine physics being introduced on the other consoles this year. EA explained that there simply wasn't time to get the engine up and running on a new piece of hardware. Nevertheless, the exclusive GamePad functionality sounds extremely promising and has us more excited about Madden on a Nintendo system than we've been in a long time.

—STEVE T.



Wreck and Rule

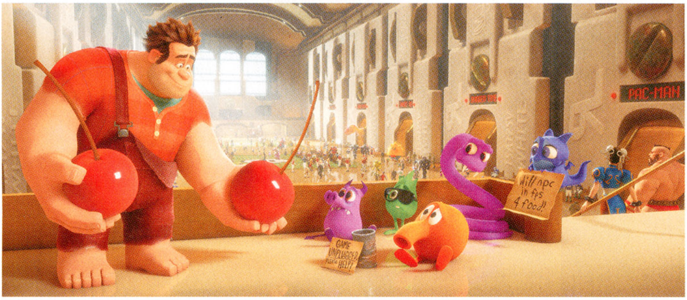
Retro gaming meets modern moviemaking in *Wreck-It Ralph*.

IT'S NOT OFTEN that we talk about movies in the pages of Nintendo Power, but then, it's not often that a movie is so heavily influenced by video games. *Wreck-It Ralph*, the upcoming film from Walt Disney Animation Studios, tells the story of Ralph, the villain of a (fictional) early-'80s arcade game called Fix-It Felix Jr. After 30 years of playing the role of the bad guy, Ralph has decided that he no longer wants to spend his life destroying things—he wants to be a hero. This leads him on a quest through the arcade as he leaves his game and ventures into other titles, such as the futuristic first-person shooter Hero's Duty and the colorful kart racer Sugar Rush. Along the way, he befriends characters like the tough-as-nails Sergeant Colhoun and the impish child Vanellope.

In addition to the original characters, the movie features cameos by scores of classic video game heroes and villains. Observant viewers will be able to spot Sonic the Hedgehog, Pac-Man, Dig Dug, Q*Bert, the Space Invaders and Centipede arcade cabinets, and more. In one particularly humorous scene, Ralph attends a bad guys' group-therapy session alongside the likes of Bowser, Dr. Eggman, M. Bison, Zangief, and Clyde (you know, the orange ghost from Pac-Man).

Next month we'll take a deeper look at the movie and bring you chats with some of the filmmakers. We'll even check out the actual Fix-It Felix Jr. arcade machine, which features heavy influences from Nintendo's Donkey Kong. With its humorous premise and multiple nods to classic gaming, we're looking forward to getting wrecked when the movie is released on November 2. —**PHIL T.**

[Below] Now we feel bad for neglecting Q*bert all these years.

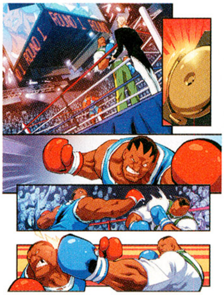


The Fight Goes On

Legendary warriors return to the printed page in the *Super Street Fighter Vol. 1* graphic novel.

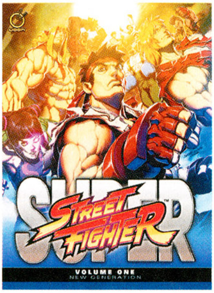
This year marks the 25th anniversary of Capcom's hit Street Fighter franchise, and Udon Entertainment is helping fans celebrate with the impending release of an all-new graphic novel entitled *Super Street Fighter Vol. 1: New Generation*. The 144-page hardbound volume is a continuation of Udon's Street Fighter comic-book series (last published in 2010) and follows the adventures of popular characters from throughout the Street Fighter franchise, including newcomers from Super Street Fighter IV, such as Juri and Hakan. To find out more about Street Fighter's return to print, we spoke to editor Matt Moylan and writer Ken Siu-Chong. —**CHRIS H.**

NINTENDO POWER What's the reason for switching to this larger graphic-novel format?
MATT MOYLAN Over the years, as with much of the comics industry, our monthly comics sales have gone down, almost to the point where comic sales barely cover the cost to print them. Meanwhile, our collected-edition sales have gone up, and continue to sell year after year. So we figured, let's go straight to the graphic-novel format as it's what the fans want.



Has any time passed since the end of the previous story, or does it pick up immediately from where things left off?
KEN SIU-CHONG About four years or so have passed since the last story ended, placing us right at the beginning of the Street Fighter III era. It was really fun thinking of what happened to a number of the SFII/Alpha characters in this era, especially for the characters that were never really given any screen time in the SFIII games. Some characters have basically stayed the same while others have had obvious changes in their life, like Ken getting married and having a four-year-old kid to deal with, or E. Honda becoming a spokesman for sumo wrestling to make it an Olympic sport. We'll also touch on what happened to a slew of others, like Cammy, Chun-Li, Dan, Sakura, and, of course, some guy named Ryu.

What is the plot?
KSC The main plot centers around Guile investigating a new threat to the world, called The Secret Society (previously known as The Illuminati to fans familiar with SFIII), that has secretly been influencing world events for hundreds of years. Along the way he crosses paths with Alex, who has very personal reasons for wanting to track down The Society as well.



What was your approach to bringing Street Fighter III characters into the narrative?
KSC This new team of Alex and Guile that we're introducing is one of the main bridges between the SFII and SFIII eras that we're building to make this about one big Street Fighter universe and not just SFII, SF Alpha, SFIII, or SFIV. That's one of the big reasons we're not putting a roman numeral after "Street Fighter" this time around.

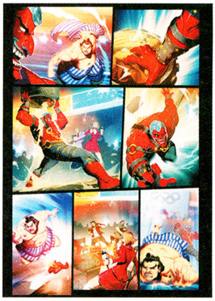
How did you decide which characters to focus on?
KSC That was a really tough decision. Some characters have a lot more attention based on what the story dictates, but we tried to make sure we at least touch on as many characters as we could. Some characters are handled in the many side stories that will accompany the main story, while others have just short appearances or mentions. For example, what happened to Vega, Sagat, and Balrog is briefly addressed, but it won't be until a later story arc where we'll hopefully get to explore them in full.

Which of the new characters have been the most fun to write?
KSC I've been looking forward to working with the SFIII characters ever since we were wrapping things up in the last series, so I'd say I definitely enjoyed finally getting to tackle characters like Alex and Urien. Some of the wackier new characters like Hakan were also a hoot!

M. Bison seemed pretty dead the last time we saw him. Is he gonna stay that way?
KSC Bison's death and the aftermath of Shadaloo's apparent fall will be touched on, but The Secret Society and Gill are definitely the new baddies in town.

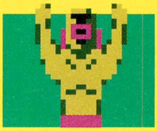
Is this a stand-alone story, or is it part of an ongoing saga?
MM *Super Street Fighter* is an ongoing graphic-novel series. Each book contains a main story that continues volume to volume, plus several bonus stories that may tie into the main plot, or just be fun side stories.

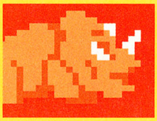
Is there anything special you're doing as a nod to the series's 25th anniversary?
MM Well, I think just bringing all these characters together is like one big celebration to us! But there will also be a bunch of bonus material in the book. We've got tons of pin-ups, rare convention pieces, rough sketches, and more.



A WINNER IS...

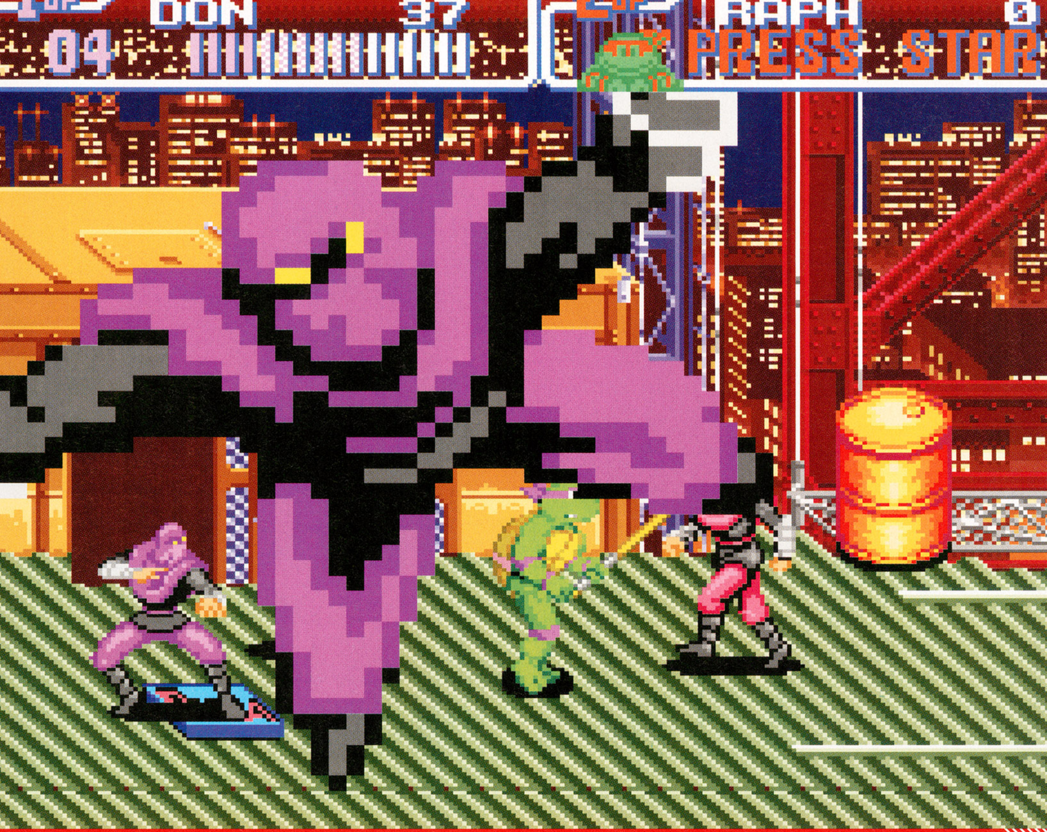
Chicken and waffles for breakfast.





DODONGO DISLIKES...

Being late to the party.



THAT WAS AWESOME!
OUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAME MOMENTS

FOOT TOSS

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES IV: TURTLES IN TIME, SUPER NES, 1992

"Turtles in Time was a great beat-'em-up, and the most satisfying move to pull off was grabbing a Foot Soldier and tossing it into the screen. Even better was throwing them right at Shredder during the Stage 4 boss fight." —**PHIL T.**

STAR POWER

A closer look at the characters we love

Dr. Ivo "Eggman" Robotnik

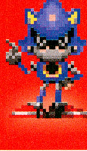
FIRST APPEARANCE:
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
SEGA GENESIS, 1991

This brilliantly sinister scientist would rule the world if it weren't for a certain do-gooding blue hedgehog.

CAREER GRAPH

HIGH POINTS

LOW POINTS

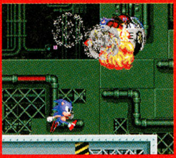


1993
Builds the ultimate anti-hedgehog weapon, Metal Sonic.

1999
Unleashes the power of Chaos.

2010
Takes a break from planning world domination to go racing.

1991
Turns woodland critters into robots in a bid for world domination, but gets defeated by Sonic the Hedgehog.



1993
Develops his worst plan ever: the Mean Bean Machine.

2010
Robotnik returns to his roots and is once again defeated by Sonic for persecuting woodland critters.

OUR FAVORITE DR. ROBOTNIK GAMES

SCORE 500
TIME 1:16
RINGS 10

Sonic the Hedgehog

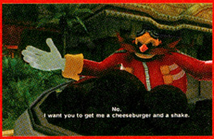
SEGA GENESIS, 1991

With groundbreaking level design, a blistering pace, and impressive visuals, the original Sonic the Hedgehog took platforming to new heights. Though Sonic was the star, Dr. Robotnik appeared as the boss of every zone, determined to put a stop to the hedgehog's antics.

Sonic Adventure 2 Battle

GAMECUBE, 2002

Alongside Shadow and Rouge, Dr. Robotnik was part of the "dark side" storyline in Sonic Adventure 2, marking the first time that the villain was playable in a Sonic platformer. The game also introduced the doc's grandfather (Prof. Gerald Robotnik) and cousin (Maria).



No.
I want you to get me a cheeseburger and a shake.

Sonic Colors

Wii, 2010

In Sonic Colors, Dr. Robotnik builds a gigantic interplanetary amusement park, claiming that he's turned over a new leaf and is repenting for his past transgressions. As you race through the levels, you can even hear Robotnik make wildly amusing announcements over the park's PA system. Spoiler alert: Robotnik is still evil.

Dr. Eggman
Oh, you are too kind, my dear future self! And I was happy to help!

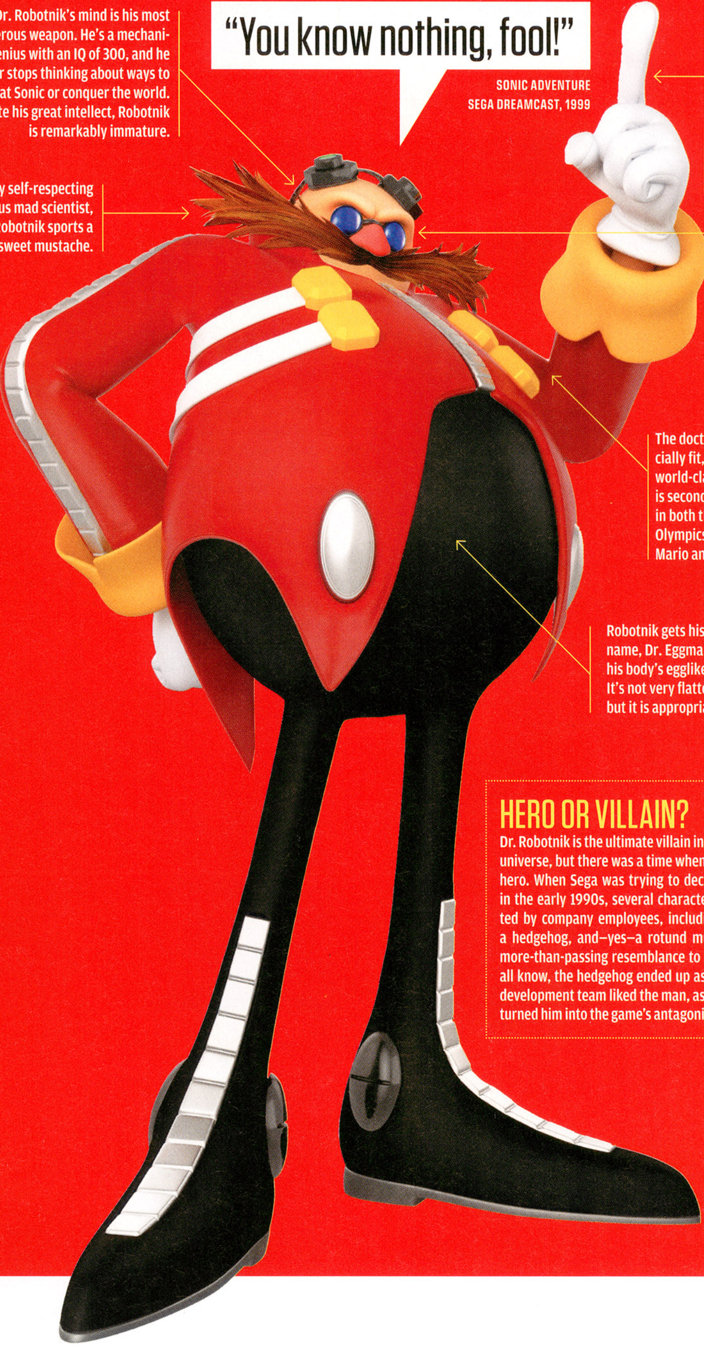
Sonic Generations

NINTENDO 3DS, 2011

The only thing better (worse?) than one Dr. Robotnik is two Dr. Robotniks! In Sonic Generations, the modern and classic versions of Dr. Robotnik team up to harness the Time Eater, a malevolent force that causes Sonic to relive his past adventures. The result is one of the best Sonic games yet.

“You know nothing, fool!”

SONIC ADVENTURE
SEGA DREAMCAST, 1999



Dr. Robotnik’s mind is his most dangerous weapon. He’s a mechanical genius with an IQ of 300, and he never stops thinking about ways to defeat Sonic or conquer the world. Despite his great intellect, Robotnik is remarkably immature.

Like any self-respecting villainous mad scientist, Dr. Robotnik sports a pretty sweet mustache.

Sonic and Robotnik are opposite in most ways, but they both like to wear white gloves. Maybe they help Robotnik maintain a better grip when he’s at the controls of his numerous destructive contraptions.

Yep, that’s right. Sonic the Hedgehog regularly picks fights with a guy who wears glasses.

The doctor might not look especially fit, but he’s apparently a world-class athlete; his Skill rating is second to none. He’s competed in both the summer and winter Olympics alongside the likes of Mario and Sonic.

Robotnik gets his nickname, Dr. Eggman, from his body’s egglike shape. It’s not very flattering, but it is appropriate.

HERO OR VILLAIN?

Dr. Robotnik is the ultimate villain in the Sonic the Hedgehog universe, but there was a time when he could have been the hero. When Sega was trying to decide upon a new mascot in the early 1990s, several character designs were submitted by company employees, including a rabbit, a bulldog, a hedgehog, and—yes—a rotund mustachioed man with a more-than-passing resemblance to Teddy Roosevelt. As we all know, the hedgehog ended up as the hero, but since the development team liked the man, as well, they kept him and turned him into the game’s antagonist.

NEW SKYLANDER!

It's Crush Hour!

Every month, we're exclusively revealing a new character from Skylanders Giants, which is heading to Wii, Nintendo 3DS, and Wii U later this year. Up next: Crusher

Crusher

Element: Earth
Character Type: Giant
Bio: Crusher knew from the moment he put on his father's mining helmet that his true passion in life was crushing rocks. He was fascinated with rock-lore and traveled all throughout Skylands in search of rare minerals to pulverize with his powerful hand-crafted rock hammer, which he also named Crusher. But along his travels, he discovered that the evil Arkeyan King was also searching for rocks—to melt down into weapons of war. Crusher's fury built up like an avalanche. After all, crushing was his job! So he put aside his life's passion and decided to use his hammer for a greater purpose—crushing Arkeyan Robots!

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©SQUARE ENIX

Enter the Dragon

NEWS *from* JAPAN

Dragon Quest X is out for the Wii console in Japan, but the results of Square Enix's big online gamble aren't in yet.

DESPITE BEING THE newest installment in a series that routinely sells three to four million copies per game, Dragon Quest X: Awakening of the Five Tribes Online launched to few lines and only six-figure sales expectations. But if the game is good enough to convince even a few hundred thousand players to start shelling out 1,000 yen (around $12.75) per month, Dragon Quest X could easily emerge as the most profitable entry in the franchise. The game looks good, but the launch has been dogged by questions: Will the series's ultracasual fan base accept the shift to online-only play? Will they know how to connect their Wii systems to the Internet? Do they even know what an online game *is*?

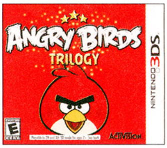
The early indications are positive: Square Enix quickly doubled the game's server capacity after its initial batch of servers filled up on the first weekend following DQX's release. Players do seem to be finding their way online, but will Square Enix find the way to their wallets? With 20 days of free access and two hours of free online play available each afternoon, players may get their fill of DQX without ever paying a dime (well, a dime more than the game's $90 retail price). But Square Enix seems confident in the game's longevity, and recently outlined bold plans to offer significant game-content updates every 10 weeks for a full decade. Let's hope that confidence leads to a prompt North American release. **—CASEY L.**

サバンナヴィレッジ 2丁目
ユーリ
イイネ!
ゆったん
さゆりーぬ
エックス

©SQUARE ENIX

The Bird Is the Word

They started out on mobile gaming platforms, and now the Angry Birds have come to N3DS. In this addictive series, you fling multicolored birds (each with different properties) from a slingshot in order to destroy a series of structures inhabited by evil green pigs. This compilation contains the original Angry Birds, Angry Birds Seasons, and Angry Birds Rio, and they've been enhanced with StreetPass functionality. Activision will be releasing Angry Birds Trilogy this holiday season. **—PHIL T.**



SONIC 4!
CONDUIT 2
MARIO ROCKS!
SUPER REVIEW!
YEAR OF THE MOUSE!
NINTENDO 3DS
METROID MANIA
GIANT REVIEWS
SONIC COLORS FIRST REVIEW!
GREAT APE!
MARIO SPORTS MIX
ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL!
NINTENDO POWER
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We salute the games, controllers, codes, and even the boxes behind the system that started it all!
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POWER QUIZ

EASY

What is the name of Konami's long-running series about a frog trying to cross the road?

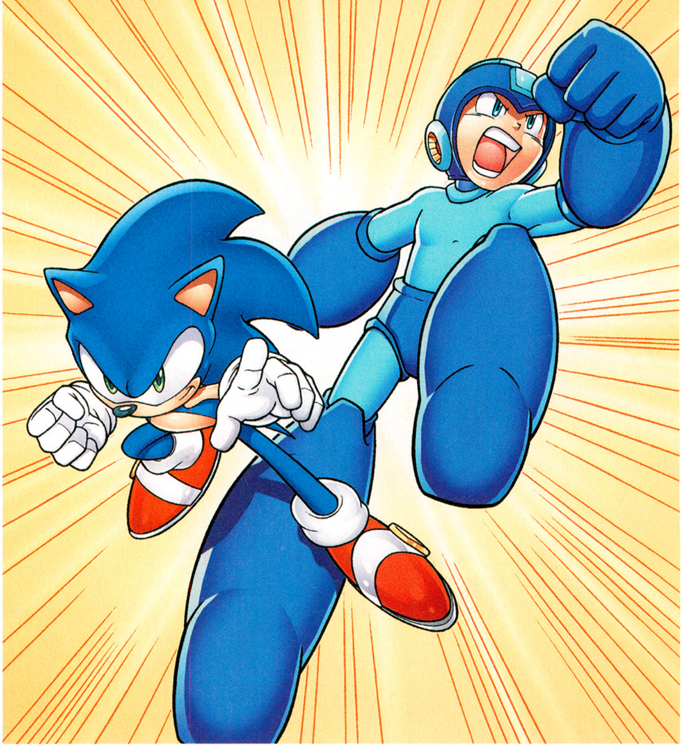
AVERAGE

What villain gave Frog from Chrono Trigger his amphibious form?

HARDCORE

Who is the love interest of Slippy Toad of Star Fox fame?

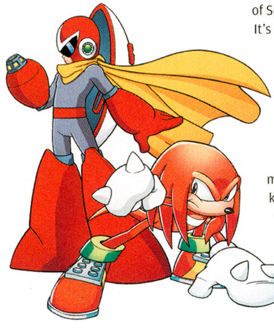
ANSWERS EASY: Frogger; AVERAGE: Magus; HARDCORE: Amanda



Blue Times Two

Mega Man and Sonic the Hedgehog join forces in an epic comic-book crossover.

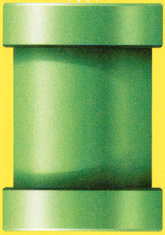
HAVING ALREADY ACHIEVED individual success in the world of comic books, two of video gaming's biggest stars—Capcom's Mega Man and Sega's Sonic the Hedgehog—will be teaming up for the first time ever in a crossover event for the ages. Written by *Sonic the Hedgehog* and *Mega Man* scribe Ian Flynn, the 12-part saga will span the pages of the monthly *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Mega Man*, and *Sonic Universe* publications from Archie Comics. The story will bring together not only Mega Man and Sonic, but also their allies and—especially—their enemies, mad scientists Dr. Wily and Dr. Robotnik. "If you're a fan of the comics, you'll enjoy the same adventure, action, fun, and characterization you've had in the regular titles. If you're a games-only fan, you'll feel right at home with the characters you recognize in a new adventure. It's a story anyone can get into and enjoy," effuses Flynn. "Primarily in the case of Sonic, it's light on the continuity. It's also more heavily game-centric in terms of characters and locations. We did this to make sure all the folks brought in by the news, but who might not be familiar with the regular books, could enjoy it just as much as the die-hard fans who know everything about these titles inside and out." You'll be able to pick up the comics at your local bookstore or comic-book retailer in early 2013. —**CHRIS H.**



WARP ZONE

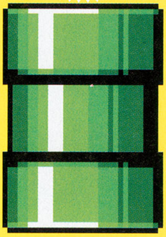
What we were writing about way back when

5 YEARS AGO



Highly anticipated and long wrapped in secrecy, Metroid Prime 3: Corruption finally got a chance to shine with a cover story in the September 2007 issue of Nintendo Power, which brought players up to speed on Samus Aran's mission and provided plenty of reasons why the game was the most immersive Metroid title yet. Another highlight of the issue was an article on WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008, in which The Hoff, as his masked alter ego El Tonto Púrpura, demonstrated the Wii motion controls and attacked one of his coworkers with a steel chair.

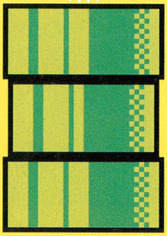
10 YEARS AGO



STAR FOX COUNTDOWN!
NINTENDO POWER
Kirby Comic Exclusive!

At last, Mario landed on GameCube with his own colorful platforming adventure, and Nintendo Power was there to congratulate him with a comprehensive cover feature. The article introduced players to the tropical resort of Isle Delfino, explained Mario's many moves, detailed the joys of using his new water-squirting FLUDD backpack, explored the mystery of the paint-polluting fake Mario, and more. The issue also contained a preview article on Star Fox Adventure and provided tips on customizing your town in Animal Crossing.

20 YEARS AGO



Nester,.......
What an interesting
name.

A quick glance at the September 1992 issue of Nintendo Power might give you the impression that little of interest was happening that month. Seriously, a cover story on Felix the Cat for NES and features on titles such as Little Samson and Super Bowling? Yikes. But beneath that drab facade, there was a lot of fun to be had. The month not only saw the release of the original Super Mario Kart, but also Konami's phenomenal shooter Axelay and Enix's brilliant action-RPG Soul Blazer.

ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
11 Classic Games Hearts • Spades Euchre • Canasta Bridge • more
20 Solitaire Games FreeCell • Klondike Golf • Yukon • Spider Pyramid • many more
13 Casino Games Texas Hold'em • Double Flop Hold'em 5-Card Draw • 7-Card Stud • Blackjack Crazy Pineapple • 5 Video Poker • more
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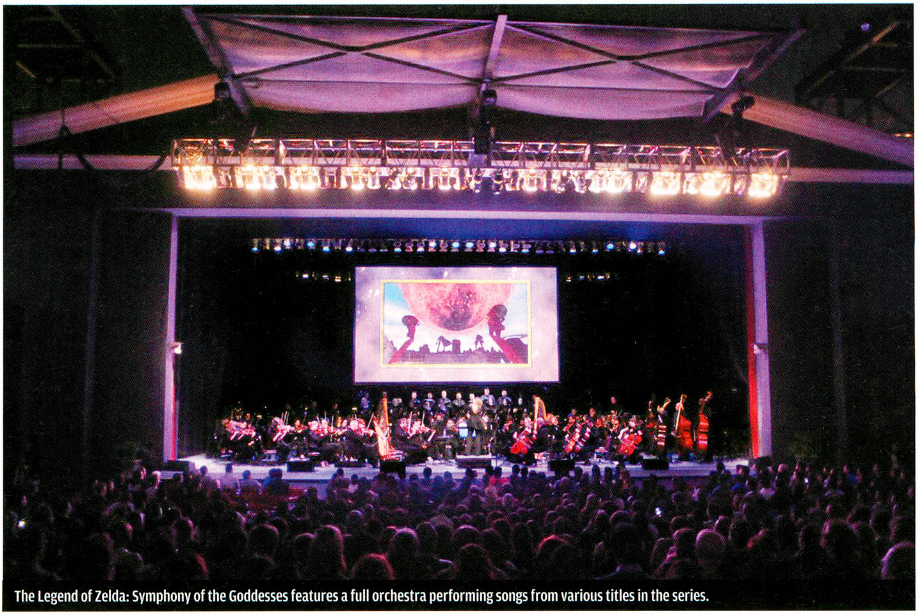


The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses features a full orchestra performing songs from various titles in the series.

Legend in the Making

A glimpse behind the scenes of The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses

What started out as a stock overworld theme in the original The Legend of Zelda has evolved into one of the most iconic and easily recognizable melodies of the past two decades. That theme song, and the rest of the music that has seen reprise throughout the series, has contributed to The Legend of Zelda's continued success and legions of fans. And now The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses brings the most unforgettable songs of the Zelda series into a beautifully rendered 90-minute musical set. The result is a wondrous journey through the Zelda franchise that's sure to bring a tear to even the most stonyhearted.

SYMPHONY OF THE Goddesses draws audiences deep into the world of Hyrule and features music from Ocarina of Time, The Wind Waker, Twilight Princess, and A Link to the Past. As a live orchestra plays the music, several video screens exhibit memorable scenes and gameplay from the series, explaining how and why Zelda, Link, and Ganondorf are all connected to the Triforce. This makes it easy for audience members who haven't played all the games to follow along with the plot line. The result is an enjoyable ride through the saga for newbies and veterans alike.

Two diehard Zelda fans conjured up the idea for the symphony after they realized The Legend of Zelda was one of the few video game franchises that hadn't been given the musical appreciation it deserves. "The Legend of Zelda has been such a beloved property, but it's never been brought into a concert format before. Really, the only place you could ever get Zelda [music] was in the video games," says Jeron Moore, one of the show's producers. He and Chad Seiter, music director and composer, conceptualized the idea from scratch and played through almost every game in the series before settling on the score. "Bringing all of those into one linear timeline that made sense was a challenge," admits Moore. "It was a matter of picking those killer titles...and organizing those that allowed the narrative to flow naturally." Seiter adds that they made sure the production, "focuses on the story. They all have these powerful themes throughout, so we used those to create a cohesive symphony."

Moore then took the idea for Symphony of the Goddesses to Jason Michael Paul (now executive producer of Symphony of the Goddesses), whose production company was already known for its success with the Dear Friends Final Fantasy concert series and Play! A Video Game Symphony.

Paul helped make the connection for Moore and Seiter to approach Nintendo with a working blueprint of the show. They were met with Nintendo's proverbial seal of approval—including the thumbs up from series creator Shigeru Miyamoto. "[Nintendo] decided to

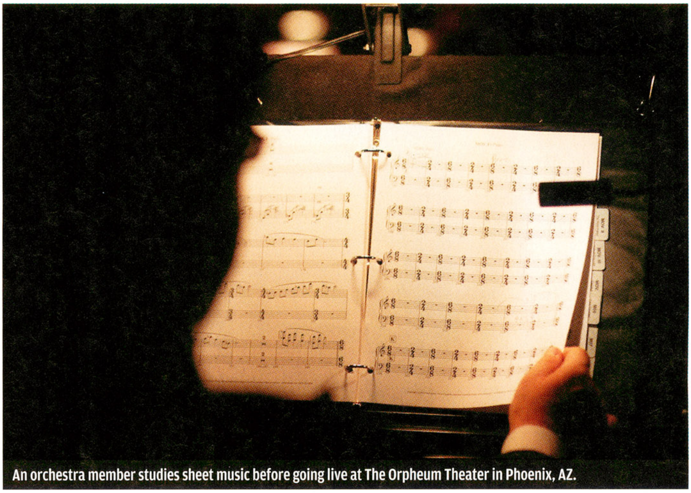
PHOTO BY ANDREW CRAIG

Conductor Eimear Noone leads the orchestra during a performance at the Greek Theater in Los Angeles, CA.

include us in their plans for a series of 25th anniversary symphonies," recalls Moore. The team worked closely with The Legend of Zelda's musical producer Koji Kondo, and its game designer, Eiji Aonuma, to put on a one-time-only The Legend of Zelda 25th Anniversary Symphony, which began in Tokyo, then traveled to Los Angeles and London. That symphony included surprise guest appearances by Aonuma and an encore called "Grandma's Theme" from The Wind Waker, performed on the piano by Kondo. The 11 arrangements from those three shows were eventually preserved on the audio CD that Nintendo shipped with The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword.

Once the 25th Anniversary Symphony had finished, Seiter and Moore set their sights on touring more widely, as they had originally envisioned. In January 2012, Symphony of the Goddesses premiered in Dallas, TX. The four-movement symphony featured smaller pieces of music tied together in a longer format than the 25th Anniversary Symphony's individual arrangements. "It was meant to draw audiences' imaginations deeper into the world of Hyrule," explains Moore. After 22 shows, the whole team is still going strong, performing in cities across the United States and Canada. "The response has been nothing but positive," Paul tells us of the show. "Ultimately it comes down to fan satisfaction."

Of course, a string of successful shows doesn't happen by accident. It takes a lot of manpower to fuel this gigantic production. Because the symphony does not have its own traveling orchestra, it's up to Seiter, who composed the entire production, to pick the company that will perform in every city. "I'll either contract the players myself or I will call the local orchestra and we'll go on recommendations," he says. "On top of that, there's also a lot of planning."



An orchestra member studies sheet music before going live at The Orpheum Theater in Phoenix, AZ.

TOP PHOTO BY ANDREW CRAIG; BOTTOM PHOTO BY MATT LE

Orchestra members prepare for rehearsal at The Orpheum Theater in Phoenix, AZ.

Seiter is referring to orchestration, which is the tedious process of getting the music together for each individual member of the orchestra. "This includes cleaning it up—the equivalent of what a book editor would do to an author," he says. "After we do this, we create this beautiful book with all the music." That book is then used to create sheet notes for every individual player and their instrument in the orchestra—choir included. The result is hundreds of sheets of paper that are distributed among 90 different performers.

And let's not forget the sound and video. Anthony Valcek, technical director and stage manager, makes sure everything is always in working order. "I work with different venues to prepare for every event before we go on site," he says. "Normally it's a single-day scenario. We'll do a one-day install at 8 a.m. and then the performance at night. Sometimes we have double shows, so we can do rehearsal and two performances, which gives us more time." It's also up to Valcek to ensure that the entire crew, which includes two producers, the music director, the conductor, the click-track operator, the merchandise coordinator, and Valcek himself, make it to the next location.

Speaking of the click track, that's the system that triggers the audio cues to synchronize the music and the video. It plays an essential part in ensuring that the whole show is properly executed and that there are no snags in the 90-minute set. It can take anywhere from two to three hours to connect and power up all the computers that run the show, but Valcek happily reports that up to this point there have been no major flubs. "I think we've come out of it with happy patrons," he reflects.

So happy, in fact, that Valcek and his team have become accustomed to roaring crowds. "When we see a full house and we know it's sold out, it drives us. As the shows go on, I see Eimear [Noone, the conductor] getting very passionate. She's feeding off the audience, and I'm feeding off the audience and her, and then you go home and you say to yourself, 'OK, now I want to do another show.'"

Noone has been working with the production since Nintendo's E3 press conference in 2011. "We've had a blast," she effuses. "The fans have been incredible to us. I love the orchestra so much and to see an audience treat them the way I've always wished an orchestra would be treated means the world to me."

Symphony of the Goddesses will continue its tour throughout 2012. Moore says the show is always developing and that every performance is different from the last. "Due to demand from fans and feedback, we kept building on it and perfecting it and that's kind of how we run it. We just continue to evolve it and make it better as we keep going." —**FLORENCE I.**

PHOTOS BY MATT LE

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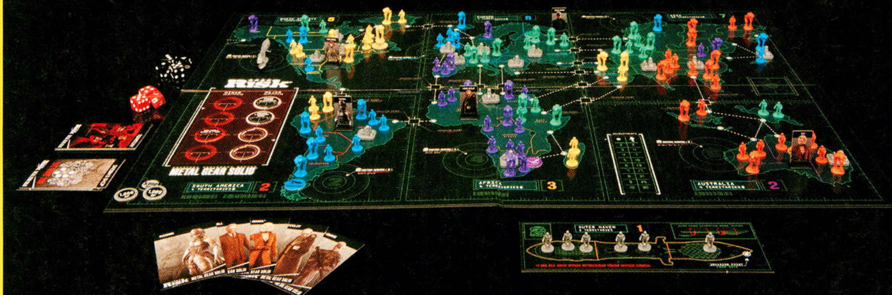
COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS

Risk
THE GAME OF STRATEGIC CONQUEST
METAL GEAR SOLID
COLLECTOR'S EDITION

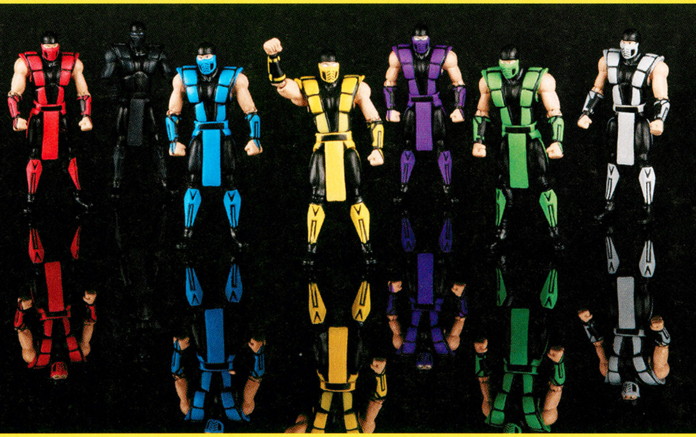
Risk It All

Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D landed on the Nintendo 3DS handheld a few months ago, but if that didn't satisfy your thirst for military conquest, you can check out the Metal Gear Solid Collector's Edition of the classic board game Risk. Manufactured by Hasbro and featuring exclusive playing pieces, the game lets three to five players take command of private military companies and enlist the help of Metal Gear Solid heroes to vie for control of the world. La-li-lu-le-lo not included.


Risk
METAL GEAR SOLID
SOUTH AMERICA
2
AFRICA
3
AUSTRALIA
2

Klassic Kolors

A veritable rainbow of ninjas from the vintage fighting game Mortal Kombat II is now available in 4" action-figure form courtesy of Jazwares. The lineup includes (pictured left to right) Ermac, Noob Saibot, Sub-Zero, Scorpion, Rain, Reptile, and Smoke. Some characters are available individually; others are sold only in sets.



PHOTOS BY BARAK SHRAMA

GAME FORECAST

NINTENDO 3DS

50 Classic Games	Maximum	10/12
Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	11/12
Angler's Club: Ultimate Bass Fishing 3D	D3	2012
Angry Birds Trilogy	Activision	HOL 12
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	11/12
Boulder Dash-XL 3D	Giant	TBA
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow—Mirror of Fate	Konami	11/12
Classic Games Overload: Card and Puzzle Edition	Telegames	11/12
Code of Princess	Atlus	10/12
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Disney Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion	Disney	11/12
Disney Princess: My Fairytale Adventure	Disney	9/12
Etrian Odyssey IV	Atlus	TBA
Fire Emblem*	Nintendo	2013
Harvest Moon 3D: A New Beginning	Natsume	10/12
Hello Kitty Picnic	Majesco	10/12
Hotel Transylvania	GameMill	9/12
Imagine Babyz	Ubisoft	10/12
Imagine Fashion Life	Ubisoft	10/12
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	11/12
Junior Classic Games	Maximum	10/12
LEGO City: Undercover*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	10/12
Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon	Nintendo	HOL 12
Mahjong 3D: Warriors of the Emperor	Giant	TBA
Moshi Monsters Moshlings Theme Park	Activision	10/12
NCIS 3D	Ubisoft	9/12
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Old Skool Classics	Storm City	10/12
Outdoors Unleashed: Africa 3D	Mastiff	2012
Outdoors Unleashed: Alaska 3D	Mastiff	2012
Paper Mario: Sticker Star	Nintendo	HOL 12
Petz Countryside	Ubisoft	11/12
Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask	Nintendo	11/12
Rabbids Rumble	Ubisoft	11/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	10/12
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	HOL 12
Spy Hunter	Warner Bros.	10/12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
Wipeout 3	Activision	9/12
Word Wizard 3D	Storm City	10/12
Wreck-It Ralph	Activision	10/12
Zero Escape: Virtue's Last Reward	Aksys	FALL 12

Wii

Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	11/12
Big Time Rush	GameMill	11/12
Cabela's Hunting Expeditions	Activision	FALL 12
Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	Disney	11/12
Disney Princess: My Fairytale Adventure	Disney	9/12
Harley Pasternak's Hollywood Workout	Majesco	10/12
Just Dance 4	Ubisoft	10/12
Just Dance: Disney Party	Ubisoft	10/12
Karaoke Joysound	Konami	2012
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	10/12
Monster High Skultimate Roller Maze	Little Orbit	HOL 12
NBA 2K13	2K Sports	10/12
Nickelodeon Dance 2	2K Play	11/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	10/12
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
Victorious: Taking the Lead	D3	11/12
Wipeout 3	Activision	9/12
Wreck-It Ralph	Activision	10/12
WWE '13	THQ	10/12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013
Zumba Fitness Core	Majesco	10/12

Wii U

Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Assassin's Creed III	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Batman: Arkham City—Armored Edition	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	HOL 12
Darksiders II	THQ	HOL 12
Family Party: 30 Great Games Obstacle Arcade	D3	HOL 12
FIFA Soccer 13	Electronic Arts	HOL 12
Game & Wario*	Nintendo	TBA
Injustice: Gods Among Us	Warner Bros.	TBA
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	HOL 12
Just Dance 4	Ubisoft	HOL 12
LEGO City: Undercover	Nintendo	HOL 12
Madden NFL 13	Electronic Arts	HOL 12
Marvel's Avengers: Battle for Earth	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Mass Effect 3	Electronic Arts	HOL 12
NBA 2K13	2K Sports	HOL 12
New Super Mario Bros. U	Nintendo	HOL 12
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	Nintendo	HOL 12
Nintendo Land	Nintendo	HOL 12
Pikmin 3	Nintendo	TBA
Project P-100*	Nintendo	TBA
Rabbids Land	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Rayman Legends	Ubisoft	TBA
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	HOL 12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
SiNG*	Nintendo	HOL 12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	TBA
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	HOL 12
Sports Connection	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tank! Tank! Tank!	Namco Bandai	HOL 12
Tekken Tag Tournament 2*	Namco Bandai	HOL 12
Wii Fit U	Nintendo	TBA
Wii U Panorama View*	Nintendo	HOL 12
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2013	Ubisoft	HOL 12
ZombiU	Ubisoft	HOL 12

NINTENDO DS

Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	11/12
Hotel Transylvania	GameMill	9/12
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	10/12
Monster High Skultimate Roller Maze	Little Orbit	HOL 12
Pokémon Black Version 2	Nintendo	10/12
Pokémon White Version 2	Nintendo	10/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
ThunderCats	Namco Bandai	9/12
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
Victorious: Taking the Lead	D3	11/12
Winx Club: Magical Fairy Party	D3	11/12
Wreck-It Ralph	Activision	10/12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013

READERS' MOST WANTED

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NINTENDO 3DS

1. Paper Mario: Sticker Star
2. Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon
3. Fire Emblem*
4. Animal Crossing*
5. Scribblenauts Unlimited

Wii

1. Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two
2. LEGO The Lord of the Rings
3. Skylanders Giants
4. Wreck-It Ralph
5. Just Dance 4

Wii U

1. New Super Mario Bros. U
2. Pikmin 3
3. Nintendo Land
4. Game & Wario
5. Rayman Legends

RED TEXT = GAMES ADDED THIS MONTH.

* TENTATIVE TITLE

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

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TUMBLE POP
WARIO LAND: SUPER MARIO LAND 3

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3, 2, 1... WORDSUP!
CANDLE ROUTE
DECATHLON 2012
RABI LABY 2

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
2020 SUPER BASEBALL
THE KING OF FIGHTERS '95
WORLD HEROES PERFECT

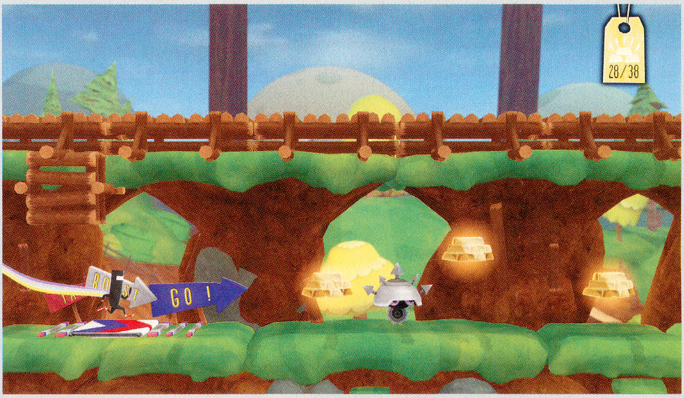
Gotta Go Fast!

CommanderVideo returns with a new high-def look in Bit.Trip Presents: Runner2, Future Legend of Rhythm Alien for Wii U.

THE SIX-PART BIT.TRIP series, which debuted on WiiWare and was later released as a retail compilation on the Wii console and the Nintendo 3DS handheld, may have ended, but that doesn't mean we've seen the last of its protagonist, the enigmatic CommanderVideo. Gaijin Games is bringing the Commander to the Wii U console in the humorously titled Bit.Trip Presents: Runner2, Future Legend of Rhythm Alien.

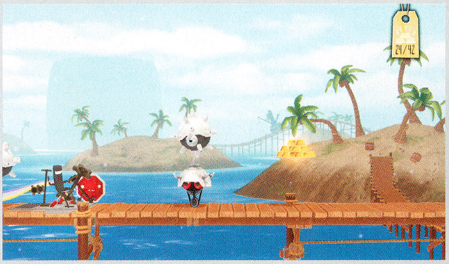
As the title suggests, this isn't a true entry in the now-complete Bit.Trip canon. Instead it serves as a side story, taking place between Bit.Trip Runner and Bit.Trip Fate (the fourth and fifth games in the series, respectively). CommanderVideo's archenemy, Timbletot, has blasted our hero with a Reality Unfusion Beam that sends CommanderVideo into another reality, which Timbletot hopes will break his mind.

This alternate-world concept explains the game's radical visual shift to shiny high definition, which evolved from the original Bit.Trip Runner's blocky, Atari 2600-inspired look. It certainly is jarring to behold CommanderVideo as a walking cylinder rather than in his classic rectangular form, but it's nice to see Gaijin Games do something new rather than toil in a rut of "that company that makes those old-looking games." Adding to the experimental nature of this game is the fact that it will be the first entry in the Bit.Trip series to feature voice acting during cut-scenes.

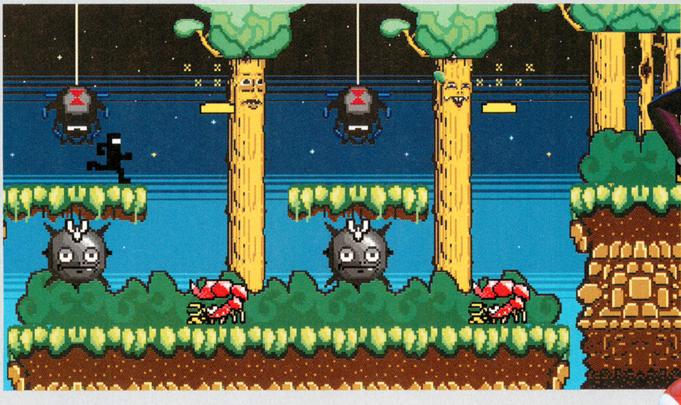


The core gameplay is mostly unchanged from the original Runner. CommanderVideo automatically moves to the right, picking up collectible items while relying on the player to help him dodge obstacles by performing the proper move at the right moment. There are basic maneuvers like jumping, sliding, and kicking, plus you'll have to raise a shield to block projectiles and launch from spring-loaded jump pads. Additionally, you must master the new slide kick, which propels CommanderVideo upward through narrow openings. To enhance your standard abilities, there are boost pads that temporarily increase your speed and fans that send the commander flying into the sky. Another new addition is rails. CommanderVideo can not only grind on them, but also dangle from them as one might from a zip line. You'll often have to switch between riding and hanging from the rails to dodge incoming hazards.

There are five worlds in Runner2, each containing 20 levels. The worlds are themed, allowing for a variety of different backgrounds. Over the course of his journey, CommanderVideo travels through lands of clouds, oceans, forests, technology, and pipes. Bit.Trip fans will definitely appreciate the technology stage, which draws its visual inspiration from the original Bit.Trip Runner. At the end of each world, you must face off against a boss while still moving forward. This requires dodging the boss's



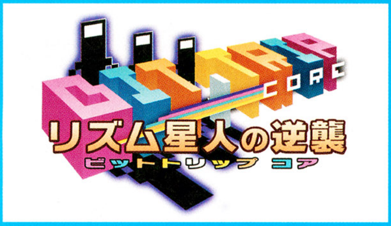
[Below] In sharp contrast to Runner2's HD visuals, the bonus levels show what CommanderVideo's quest would look like on an 8-bit machine.

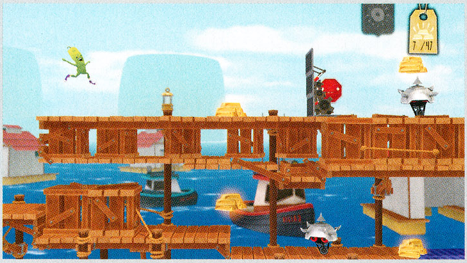


SUGOI SUBTITLES

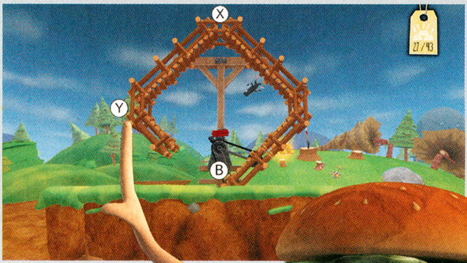
Given the simple names of previous Bit.Trip entries, Runner2's title might strike you as especially convoluted, but there's a story behind it. When the original Bit.Trip games were released in Japan, a few of them were given amusingly overwrought subtitles that would presumably make them more appealing to the Japanese audience. The games we know as Bit.Trip Core, Void, and Runner are dubbed Bit.Trip Core: Counterattack of Rhythm Alien, Bit.Trip Void: Rhythm Alien Barrage Fire, and Bit.Trip Runner: A Flat-Out Run of the Rhythm Alien overseas.

Pretty amazing, right? Gaijin Games thought so as well, and decided to beat the Japanese translators to the punch by giving Runner2 a dramatic subtitle from the start. Will the title get even crazier when this game is finally released in Japan? Only time will tell.


BIT.TRIP
CORE
リズム星人の逆襲
ビットトリップ コア



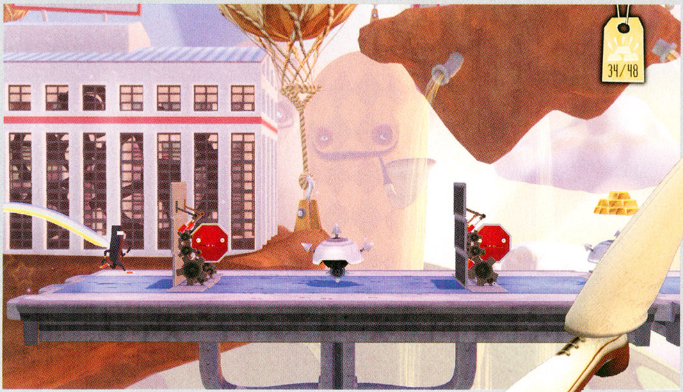
[Above] Although the original Bit.Trip Runner was fantastic, it did lack a creepy, anthropomorphic pickle. Runner2 thankfully fixes that problem.

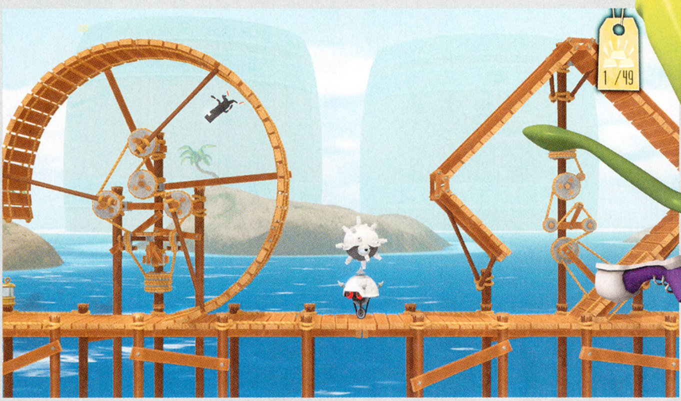


projectiles (such as cannonballs or exploding barrels) while waiting for an opening to counterattack.

If all of that sounds like a lot to keep track of, well, it is—especially when CommanderVideo starts to really move, causing obstacles to pop up in rapid-fire fashion. Veterans of the Bit.Trip series know that one of its hallmarks is its high level of difficulty. Incredibly fast reflexes are required to get anywhere in Runner2, but Gaijin Games has taken a few steps to make the action more accessible to players of all skill sets. The most obvious addition is the three difficulty settings. You can choose to play in easy, medium, or hard mode, and your selection will vary the number of threats in CommanderVideo's way. Plus, branching paths in several levels give you more options. One path will invariably be tougher than the other, so if a particular road is proving too stressful, the other option might be more your speed. Finally, there is the matter of mid-level checkpoints, which the original Runner notoriously lacked. They are present here, so a slipup near the end of a level doesn't need to spell disaster. Experienced players can opt to bypass checkpoints, however, by jumping over them, thereby earning extra points for skill (and bravery).

Those points will definitely mat-

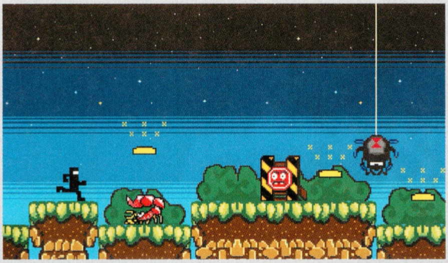


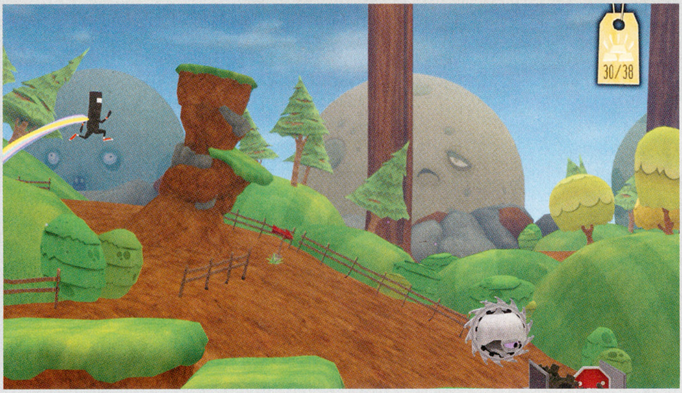


ter to competitive players looking to top their friends' high scores. Runner2 has an elaborate scoring system in which flawless runs are handsomely rewarded. By collecting all of the plus signs and gold scattered throughout each stage, you are awarded with a Perfect status after crossing the finish line. Additionally, CommanderVideo will hop into a cannon that is aimed at a target. If you time the weapon's firing so the commander hits the bull's-eye, your level will be upgraded to Perfect Plus.

Bonus points come from other sources, too, such as one of CommanderVideo's new techniques—dancing. Pressing the specified button while running causes him to bust a funky move, which ups his score. Use caution, though; when you're freestyling you can't perform any other actions, so it's easy to accidentally run into a hazard. Furthermore, as you race through loop-de-loops and angular square-de-squares in CommanderVideo's path, properly timed Control Stick rotations and button taps add to your score.

If you're not into competing for points, never fear: there are other goals to pursue. The levels contain special coins that unlock new costumes for CommanderVideo, and secret paths require you to collect keys before they are unlocked. And CommanderVideo is not even the only character you're able to control. There are multiple bizarre costars to be discovered, including the humanoid pickle Unkle Dill and the burger-headed disco star Whetfahrt Cheeseborger. Bit.Trip fans will appreciate the return of characters like CommandgirlVideo and the blocky Retro CommanderVideo.

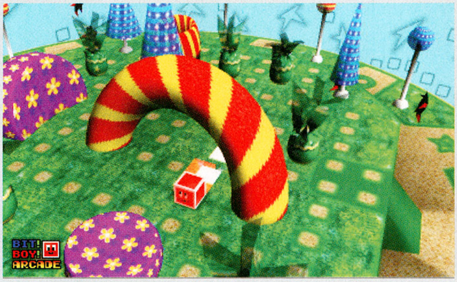


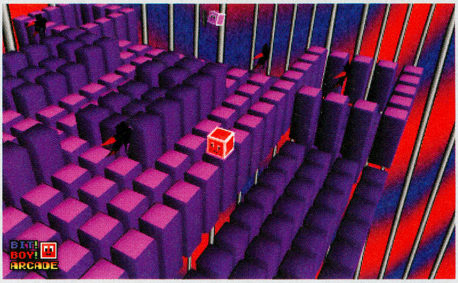


Speaking of retro, the 8-bit-influenced bonus rounds from Bit.Trip Runner are back, with a twist. As you run through a stage, you might spot a Famicom (the Japanese version of the NES) cartridge hovering onscreen. Grabbing the cart triggers a minigame on the Wii U GamePad controller's touch screen. The minigame is essentially a vision of how Runner2 would look if it were an NES title. You have three lives to complete the bonus game, and doing so allows you to skip the current level (and delivers the amusing broken-English message of "Winning Congratulation!")

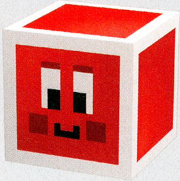
Music played a large role in the Bit.Trip series, and it's no different in Runner2. Matt Harwood, the composer for the other Bit.Trip games, returns to lend his funky techno touch to this title. Runner2 also features guest artist Disasterpeace, who previously created the music for the games Fez and Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter.

The Bit.Trip series made a big splash on the Wii Shop Channel, and it looks like Bit.Trip Presents: Runner2, Future Legend of Rhythm Alien is poised to do the same on Wii U. We're anxiously awaiting the commander's return this coming January. —**PHIL T.**





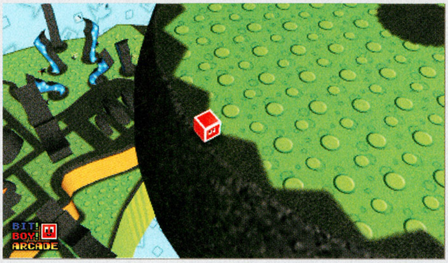
A Bit Retro



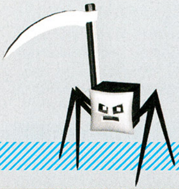
Get ready for classic-style action with Bit Boy!! Arcade for Nintendo 3DS.

IN THE ORIGINAL Bit Boy!! for WiiWare, cube-shaped protagonist (and titular Bit Boy) Kubi had to travel through time to rescue his friends in six different eras of video game history. Now Kubi is back and ready to embark on an all-new eShop adventure for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

This time out, Kubi is on a quest to meet his creator (that is, the game's designer), but the basic gameplay remains the same—you must once again avoid enemies, navigate mazelike levels, and attempt to rescue your buds. In almost every other regard, however, Bit Boy!! Arcade offers big improvements over its predecessor. Kubi still has no innate offensive abilities, but you'll now snag weapons (such as rockets and bombs) to blast through barriers and use Pixel Kinetic Powers to move obstacles. You'll also be able to grab a special power-up that allows you to briefly transform into a Pixel Tornado to destroy any nearby enemies. If you score highly enough in each stage, you'll have the chance to battle the level's boss; do poorly, though, and you may find yourself reaching into your stash of Play Coins to purchase a few continues.

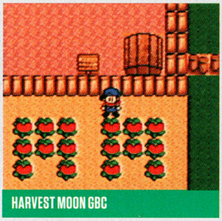


Though you no longer visit different "bit generations," the game promises to present plenty of visual variety. Each of the game's five worlds (every one containing three levels with 20 phases apiece) features a unique art style; the environments include a retro pixel world, an origami-style paper world, and a realistic cave world. The final game should also offer more than an hour of voice acting. If all goes according to plan, publisher/developer Bplus hopes to make Bit Boy!! Arcade available in the Nintendo eShop late this year. **—CHRIS H.**

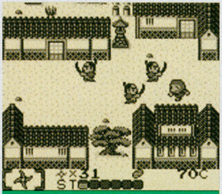


Virtual Trio

Three more Game Boy classics prepare to join the Nintendo 3DS Virtual Console lineup.



HARVEST MOON GBC



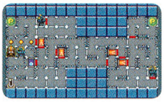
MYSTICAL NINJA STARING GOEMON

THIS SUMMER saw a substantial increase in the number of classic Virtual Console games available for Nintendo 3DS via the Nintendo eShop, but there's still more vintage gaming goodness in the pipeline. From Natsume, you can look forward to rest and relaxation with Harvest Moon GBC (a handheld version of the seminal farming-sim series) and Legend of the River King GBC (a fishing RPG). More action-packed but no less cute is Konami's Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon, a top-down action-adventure originally released in 1998. Mystical Ninja is tentatively scheduled to hit this fall, while the release dates for Harvest Moon and Legend of the River King have yet to be determined. **—CHRIS H.**

EVALUATION STATION

Wii DOWNLOAD
NINTENDO DSi DOWNLOAD
NINTENDO 3DS DOWNLOAD

N3DS DOWNLOAD



DOT RUNNER: COMPLETE EDITION

PUBLISHER: INTENSE
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $4.99

Part dungeon-crawler and part puzzle game, Dot Runner: Complete Edition is about (surprise!) collecting dots by running through mazelike levels. It isn't quite like Pac-Man though, as stages typically have secondary objectives such as hitting door switches or rescuing allies in a certain order. Some puzzles are fun, but many are difficult because of clunky controls. It's also disappointing that the 3D view displayed on the top screen is almost useless for gameplay. —**CODY M.**

Hmmm...

N3DS DOWNLOAD

FAMILY TENNIS 3D

PUBLISHER: ARC SYSTEM WORKS
GENRE: SPORTS
PRICE: $6.99

Offering arcade tennis of the Japanese variety, Family Tennis 3D brings close-to-cartridge quality to an eShop title—not bad for the price. Competition is divided between Free Play (featuring singles and doubles), Tournament, and Minigames modes, and players can mix things up (within narrow confines) by choosing from eight family members—each with different stats—to play as. Though it's graphically a mixed bag and lacks multiplayer, it's a solid win by eShop standards.

—**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD

THE PHANTOM THIEF STINA AND 30 JEWELS

PUBLISHER: AGETEC
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $4.99

Absurd title aside, this game's premise holds promise. As the titular cat burglar, you'll begin each level by selecting an entry point, then scurry to collect security codes from terminals that unlock the multistage cage surrounding the jewel you seek. Both you and the detective chasing you employ robots to complicate matters. Unfortunately, the whole exercise is low-rent, frustrating, and insidiously boring. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

N3DS DOWNLOAD

HP 900/900
LVL 30

PLANET CRASHERS

PUBLISHER: UTV IGNITION **GENRE:** RPG **PRICE:** $9.99

Let's be frank: Planet Crashers is a pathetic excuse for an RPG. For starters, the story is pretty much nonexistent—all you're told throughout the game is that some evil folks are trying to snuff out the sun, and that you need to be level 30 to stop them. To get there you do nothing but complete tedious fetch quests, which consist of searching the same bland dungeons over and over again. Every foe is identical, too: they're only reskinned and slightly stronger when you progress to the next area. And to top off an already unsatisfying experience, the game's final "boss"—yet another generic enemy—admits that there was no evil in the first place, and that this monotonous slog was just a joke to waste your time. That's right—a prank that costs you $10 and nine hours of your life that you'll never get back. —**CODY M.**

Grumble Grumble

N3DS DOWNLOAD

14
STAND!
100
18
STAND!

SWEET MEMORIES: BLACK JACK

PUBLISHER: CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: GAMBLING
PRICE: $3.99

This is a barebones, two-mode blackjack game. That said, the purpose of this game is unrelated to cards; your opponents comprise a bevy of young anime girls and you unlock tame—but suggestive—gallery images of said girls as you make your way through the game's achievements. You might ask, "Why not just look at this sort of thing online?" I'm guessing some creepers find that too easy.

—**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

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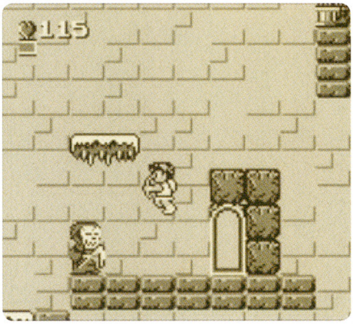

KID ICARUS: OF MYTHS AND MONSTERS

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1991 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
GENRE: ACTION **PRICE:** $3.99

This sequel fixes the problems that plagued the original NES Kid Icarus. Here stages scroll in all directions so Pit doesn't die if he falls off the bottom of the screen, and the difficultly level is more balanced. This makes fighting through the action stages and exploring the game's dungeons much more enjoyable. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

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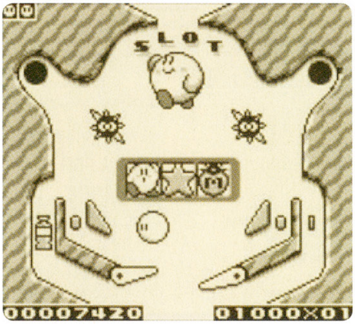


KIRBY'S PINBALL LAND

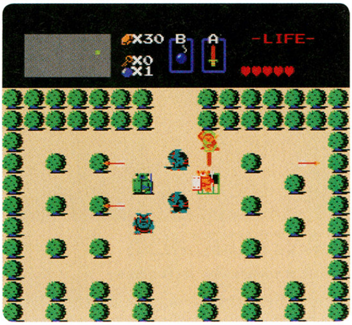
PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1993 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
GENRE: PINBALL **PRICE:** $3.99

Developed by HAL Laboratory (who also made the excellent Revenge of the 'Gator pinball title for Game Boy), Kirby's Pinball Land is by no means a realistic simulation of the ol' silver ball, but its arcade sensibilities result in a very fun game. With three tables to choose from, each filled with unusual obstacles, hidden bonus rounds, and even boss fights, there is plenty of variety to be found here. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

EVALUATION STATION

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



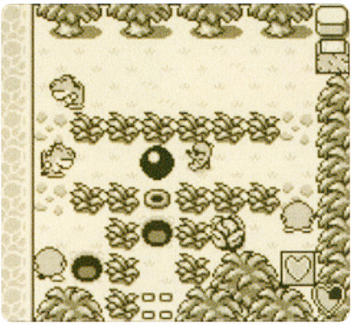
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

PLATFORM: NES **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1987 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
GENRE: ADVENTURE **PRICE:** $4.99

What is there to say? The Legend of Zelda is one of the most important and influential video games of all time. An argument could be made that no other title has ever been so far ahead of its contemporaries. Better still, the game remains fun to this day. If you haven't played it yet...well, you should probably be ashamed of yourself. Fortunately, this is a perfect opportunity to correct that egregious oversight. —STEVE T.

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



MOLE MANIA

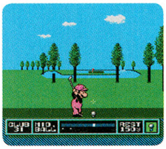
PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1997 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
GENRE: ACTION **PRICE:** $2.99

Phil T.'s Pick

I am delighted that this oft-forgotten gem has finally gotten a Virtual Console release. Mole Mania is a charming action-puzzle game where each stage feels a bit like the dungeons from a classic 2D Zelda title. Your ability to move between the surface and underground leads to some very clever level design.

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



NES OPEN TOURNAMENT GOLF

PLATFORM: NES
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1991
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: SPORTS
PRICE: $4.99

Having played many an 8-bit golf game as a lad, I'm keen on the fine line those early entries walked between sim and cardboard cutout; the best offered enough sophistication to keep things skill-based, but not so much that you felt like you were playing anything close to real golf (which would be awful, as you know). This one nails it. Plus, there's Mario! —PATRICK C.

Recommended

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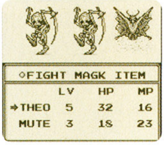

THE SWORD OF HOPE II

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1996
PUBLISHER: KEMCO
GENRE: RPG
PRICE: $2.99

Combining elements of traditional RPGs with those of classic adventures like Shadowgate, The Sword of Hope II provides a reasonably deep (albeit archaic) role-playing experience. Though the exploration and turn-based combat is fairly fun, the game feels even older than its 1996 release date suggests; the pacing is glacial and the characterization is nonexistent. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

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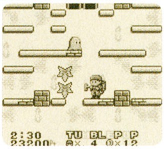


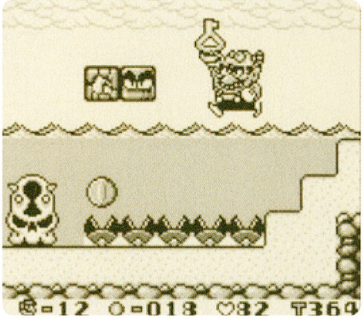
TUMBLE POP

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1993
PUBLISHER: G-MODE/DATA EAST
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $2.99

Using a high-powered vacuum to suck up and spit out monsters and aliens can be pretty fun. Each bite-sized level involves a mix of maze-navigation and platforming, in which you defeat the enemies as cheerful 8-bit music plays. Unfortunately there isn't much variation between Tumble Pop's eight worlds, and the repetitive gameplay turns fairly stale if you aren't playing in short spurts. —CODY M.

Hmmm...

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



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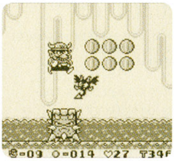


WARIO LAND: SUPER MARIO LAND 3

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1994 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** $3.99

After stealing the show as the villain in Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins, Wario stole the handheld series away from Mario by taking the playable role in this sequel. While some key Mario-series elements remain, Wario can smash into foes and item boxes, as well as don helmets with special abilities—all in the name of treasure-hunting. It makes for a much different kind of platformer, though it's a welcome change, and Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3 still delights after all this time. It's simple in approach but the challenge is solid, and between the antihero's smirking sneer and the fantastic tunes, this classic definitely amuses. It's well worth the bite-sized price to see how the long-running series started off. —ANDREW H.

Recommended

DSiWARE

3, 2, 1... WORDSUP!

PUBLISHER: ENJOYUP GAMES
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

More like a language-class exercise than a game, the awkwardly titled 3, 2, 1... WordsUp! challenges you to assemble sets of letters into as many words as you can within a time limit. It's not a very exciting premise and the presentation is bland, but trying to top your high score is addictive. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

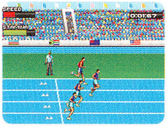
CANDLE ROUTE

PUBLISHER: TEYON
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

Candle Route tasks you with finding the best path through each stage in order to collect matches and ignite candles using a limited number of moves. Simple controls and rules allow for a pick-up-and-play experience, and new types of obstacles are gradually introduced to help keep things interesting. Unless you're a logic savant, however, you'll probably end up relying on trial-and-error tactics before long, and that gets old rather quickly. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



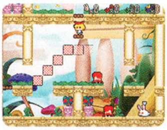
DECATHLON 2012

PUBLISHER: CINEMAX
GENRE: SPORTS
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

Riding the coattails of the London 2012 games, a lackluster Olympics-themed title surfaces on DSiWare to make a quick buck from unsuspecting enthusiasts. You play 10 track-and-field events in a sequence, during which you repeatedly slide and/or tap the stylus to get your athlete to perform. There's little difference between events besides slight variations of tapping and sliding, however, and it's difficult to tell what effect your input has on your player's actions. —CODY M.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



RABI LABY 2

PUBLISHER: AGETEC
GENRE: PLATFORMER
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

Puzzle-platformer Rabi Laby 2 has you switching between two characters who must work together to reach each stage's exit. Although it does seem charming at first glance, the game quickly reveals itself to be a flawed mess. For example, the difficulty is extremely inconsistent, the confusing dialogue is riddled with grammatical problems, and solving most levels requires a ridiculous amount of tedious trial and error. It's more aggravating than rewarding. —CODY M.

Grumble Grumble

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE

2020 SUPER BASEBALL

PLATFORM: NEOGEO
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1991
PUBLISHER: D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK
GENRE: SPORTS
PRICE: 900 POINTS

The heady days of 2D baseball were, I seem to recall, marked by two gameplay phenomena: ludicrous pitching physics and virtually useless outfielders. Both are abundant in 2020 Super Baseball, but its silly America's-pastime-in-space premise (there are landmines in the outfield) sets the stage for such ridiculousness adroitly. Additionally, it offers far better control and more expected outcomes than most. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE

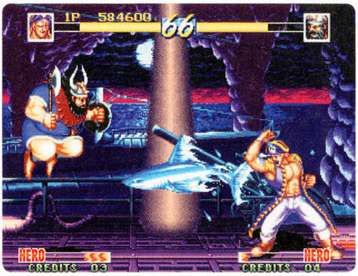
THE KING OF FIGHTERS '96

PLATFORM: NEOGEO **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1996
PUBLISHER: D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK **GENRE:** FIGHTING **PRICE:** 900 POINTS

As the fourth installment of this team-based 2D fighting series to hit Virtual Console, The King of Fighters '96 isn't exactly overflowing with innovation, but it sure is fun. What it lacks in new ideas it makes up for with crisp action, responsive controls, a nice array of game modes, and an impressive roster of 27 characters (which includes several excellent new additions, such as the Boss Team). Furthermore, the difficulty level is much more reasonable than in most NeoGeo fighting games. Sure, the price is a bit steep, but this version of KOF '96 is well worth adding to your collection if you don't already have it in some other form. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



WORLD HEROES PERFECT

PLATFORM: NEOGEO **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1995
PUBLISHER: D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK **GENRE:** FIGHTING **PRICE:** 900 POINTS

The World Heroes titles have never been as polished as other NeoGeo fighting games, but World Heroes Perfect is a fairly respectable entry in the genre nonetheless. Though the action is on the stiff side compared to its contemporaries, it does dish up attractive visuals, solid controls (which are much more intuitive than in previous games in the series), and impressive amounts of weirdness; many of the characters seem to be based on historical figures and the fighting takes place in various time periods. The combat provides some decent one-on-one fun, but there are many superior options on Virtual Console. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

ALSO AVAILABLE

Hamster Corporation has released two more number-and-grid-based puzzlers in its Nikoli series. **Akari by Nikoli** and **Masyu by Nikoli** are available in the Nintendo eShop for $4.99 each.... If you're in an educational mood, DSiWare is just the ticket. **Topoloco** (500 Points/$4.99) teaches geography, **Ace Mathician** (200 Points/$1.99) lets you practice math, and **Petit Computer** (800 Points/$7.99) lets you create your own programs using a modified version of BASIC.... Meanwhile, on WiiWare you can get artistic with **Let's Create! Pottery** (500 Points).

PREVIEWS

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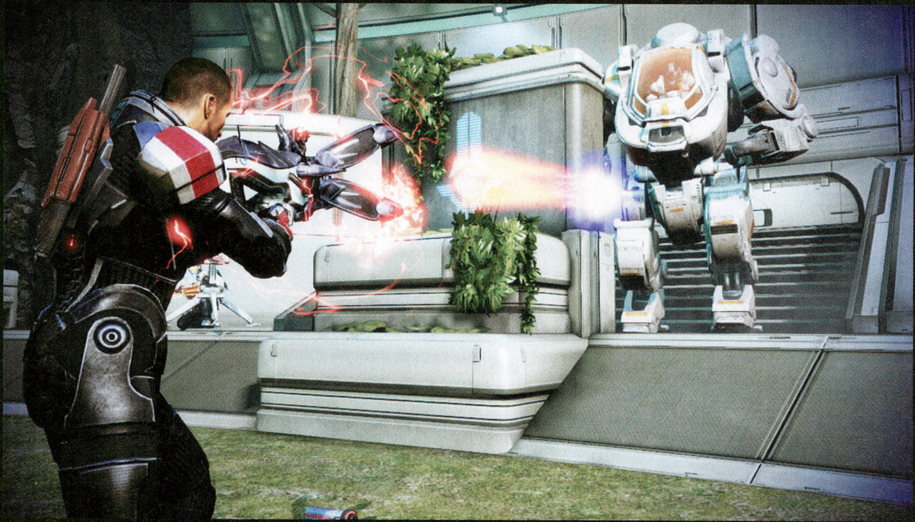
MASS EFFECT 3

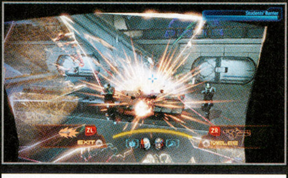
BioWare's space epic reaches the final frontier.



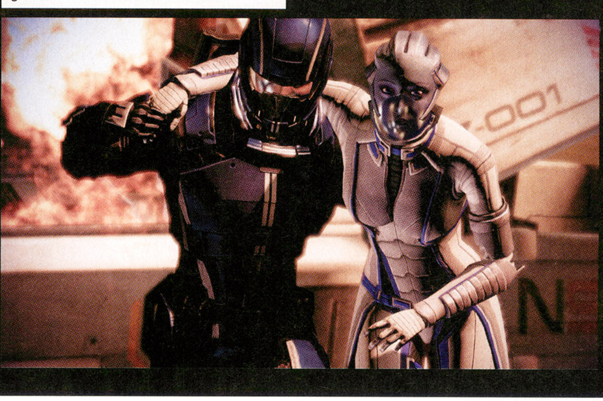
THE END IS nigh. Seemingly omnipotent synthetic beings called Reapers are on a mission to eradicate technologically advanced organic life, and Mass Effect 3 for the Wii U console begins with them making an all-out assault on Earth. Now it's up to Commander Shepard, his (or her; it's your choice) allies, and the crew of the *SSV Normandy* to unite all the various humans and aliens across the galaxy and put an end to the Reaper threat.

Of course, the Reapers aren't the only baddies in the universe. Our demo of this third-person shooter/action-RPG had us fighting waves of soldiers who are part of Cerberus, a pro-human organization that embodies the "ends justify the means" philosophy. These troopers attacked the Grissom Academy, a space station that serves as a school for Biotics (basically folks with telekinetic abilities), so Shepard and his squad—composed of Turian sharpshooter Garrus Vakarian and Asari scientist Liara T'Soni—are tasked with rescuing the students and defeating the Cerberus infantry.

The demo drops you right into the fray, but thankfully there's a heavy weapon on the ground in front of you: the M-597 Ladon, a launcher with which you can lock onto multiple enemies and unleash a volley of target-seeking missiles. (This weapon does not appear in any of the previously released versions of Mass Effect 3.) As with all armaments in this title, you use the M-597 Ladon by holding ZL to bring up the targeting reticle and pressing ZR to fire. This powerful instrument of destruction is useless after one shot, however, so you have to rely on other resources to clear out the rest of the opposition. Luckily, you have a lot of options. If baddies get in your face, you can tap B for a quick melee strike or hold B to stab opponents with a blade that springs forth from the omni-tool on your forearm. You're also equipped with an assault rifle and a sniper rifle, as well as a handful of different ammo powers such as Incendiary (which sets foes ablaze) and Disruptor (which amplifies the damage to shields). Furthermore, your squadmates' abilities are at your disposal: you can order Garrus to stun a synthetic adversary with Overload, for example, or have Liara freeze an opponent is his tracks with Stasis.



[Above] In the last part of the demo, you can get behind the wheel of an Atlas mech.



Mass Effect 3 isn't all about action; the quieter moments can sometimes be the best.

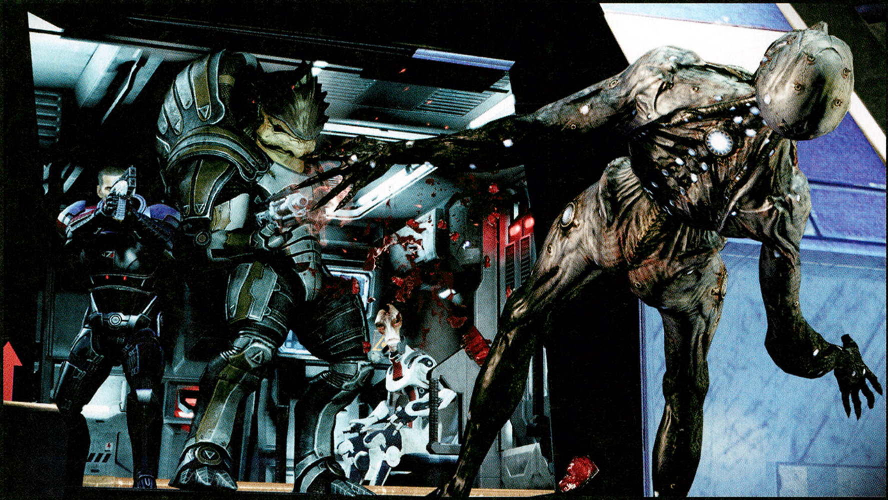
MAKE YOUR CHOICE

The Mass Effect series is all about choices. Your decisions influence Commander Shepard's morality, for example, determining whether he's a high-principled Paragon or a ruthless Renegade. These choices can have long-term story ramifications. Many of your selections in the original Mass Effect are reflected in Mass Effect 2, and your choices in both of those titles affect Mass Effect 3. Because its predecessors are nonexistent on Nintendo platforms, however, Mass Effect 3 for Wii U has you making these narrative-altering choices via an interactive comic. Here you are presented with the major story beats of the previous two games, which should bring series newcomers up to speed.

In order to access these powers, you *could* hold R, which brings up a wheel that has all of your squad's abilities on it, then use the left Control Stick to select the power you want. But a much easier way to employ everyone's skills is to use the touch screen on the Wii U GamePad controller. When you pause the game, the power wheel appears on the GamePad, and you can drag and drop the powers from the wheel to one of eight slots. When you continue the adventure, you simply tap a power's icon on the controller's screen to use it. Additionally, you can reposition your teammates by dragging their icons on the touch screen's map.

The touch-screen features aren't the only things that separate this edition of Mass Effect 3 from its siblings. Some content that was available only via download on PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 (the extended cut of the ending, for instance, as well as characters and weapons for the up-to-four-player online-co-op mode) will be included on the Wii U disc. And for the first time on a home console, Mass Effect 3 is playable in full 1080p resolution. Considering all of this good stuff, it seems this Wii U launch title is the definitive version of BioWare's space epic. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii U
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **BIOWARE**
RELEASE: **Q4 2012**



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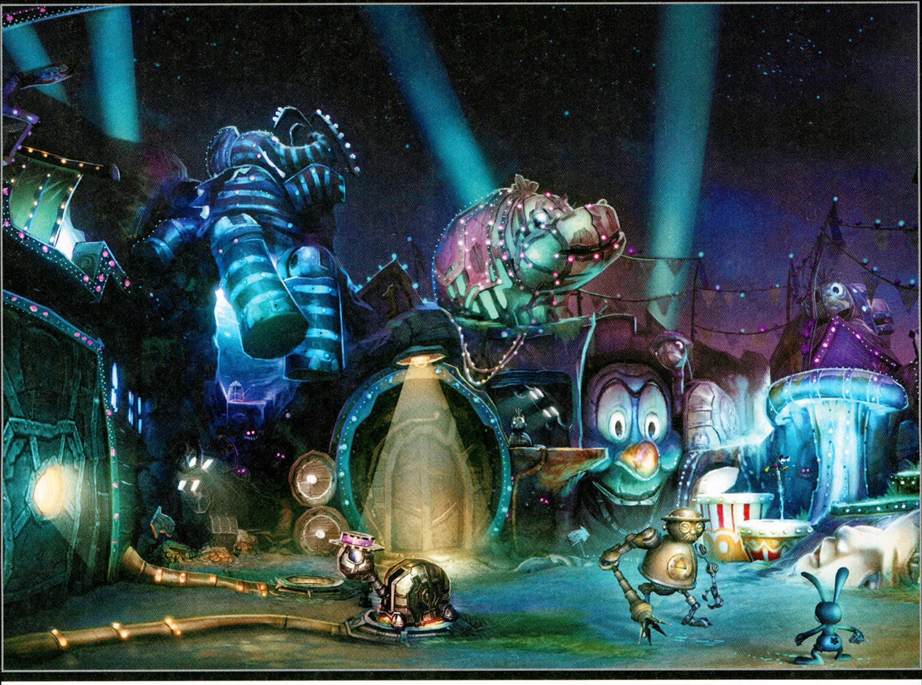
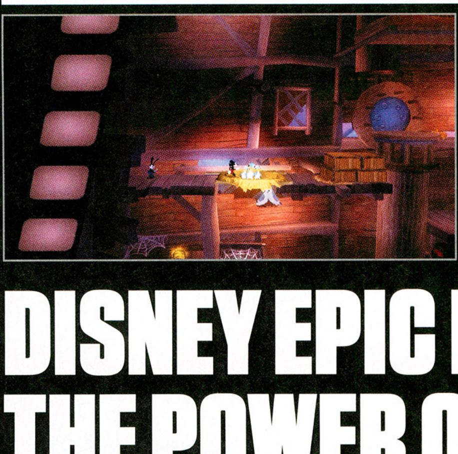
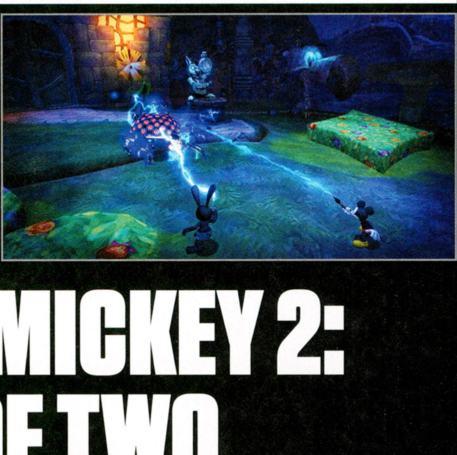


[Above] One of the new enemies in The Power of Two is based on Tik-Tok from *Return to Oz*. How's that for an awesomely obscure reference?





DISNEY EPIC MICKEY 2: THE POWER OF TWO

Proving two is better than one

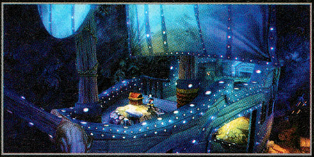
THE LAUNCH OF Wii U is sure to dominate the buzz heading into this holiday season, but there's still a handful of titles worth looking forward to on the good ol' Wii console. Most notable among them is Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two. Our latest sampling of the game—set in a previously unrevealed level dubbed The Floatyard—has left us as enthusiastic as ever about Junction Point's ambitious sequel.

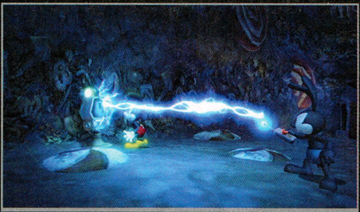
The Floatyard gets its name from the discarded parade floats that litter its landscape. As with everything in the Epic Mickey saga, the floats are pulled from actual Disney history—in this case, the Electrical Parades that have long been a nighttime attraction at Disney's theme parks. Perhaps it had something to do with the giant, disembodied head from the Alice in Wonderland float, but this particular level seemed a bit grimmer than the others we've visited thus far.

It did not, however, stray from the game's overarching theme of player choice. When Mickey's path is blocked by a towering animatronic Stromboli, for instance, you have a couple of options for getting past the *Pinocchio*-inspired obstacle. You can either use thinner to expose the pipe works that run through its stomach or you can try to restore the attraction to working order so it can lift our hero to the entrance of an alternate route. The latter option highlights the game's cooperative element by requiring Oswald to lend assistance via his high-voltage remote control. A second player can drop in and out at any time to control the lucky rabbit, and the AI takes over Oswald duty when you're playing solo. For most of our demo, Chris Hoffman joined in as Oswald, and despite an occasionally finicky split-screen camera (and The Hoff's penchant for causing mischief), the experience proved a lot of fun.

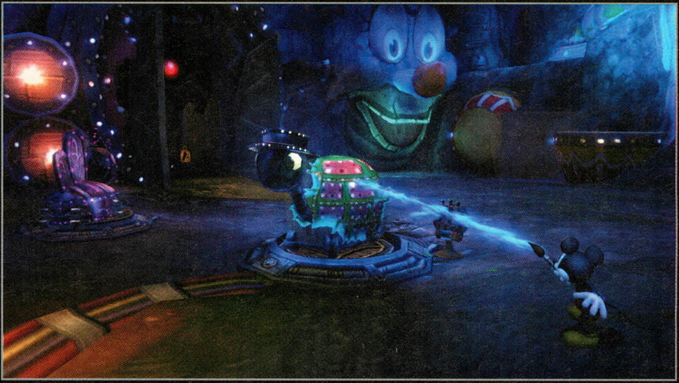
Another choice comes at the end of the level, where you can reach the exit through destructive means (essentially blowing stuff up with lots of fireworks) or by jumping into a special fountain that temporarily turns our heroes invisible, then sneaking past the makeshift security system. All of these choices have permanent consequences, which can affect not only your immediate progress, but also how certain things unfold down the road. Developer Junction Point acknowledges that kind of persistence was sorely lacking in the first game, so it's a major focal point for the sequel.

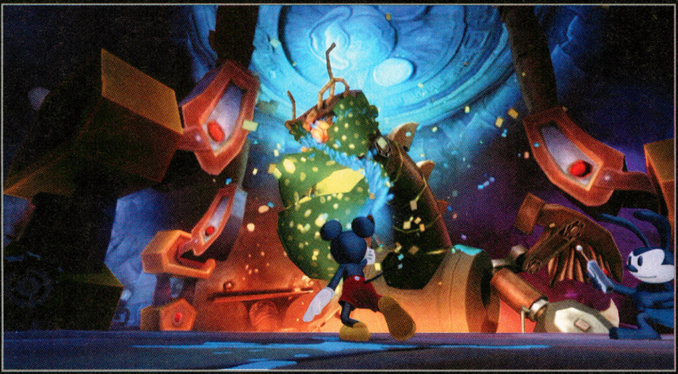
All in all, The Power of Two is shaping up quite nicely. Next month we'll take an updated look at Epic Mickey's N3DS debut, Power of Illusion. —**STEVE T.**



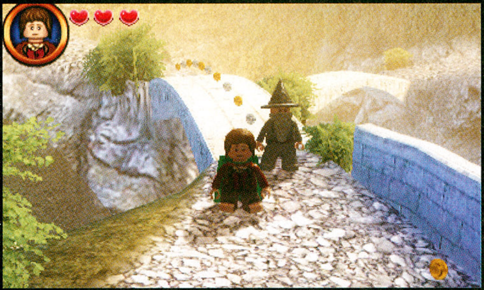


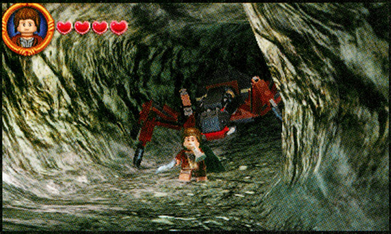
[Right] Oswald can use his remote control to get lots of old machinery in The Floatyard up and running again.





Wii **PUBLISHER:** **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **JUNCTION POINT**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2012**





[Left] Gandalf guards the way out of Rivendell. [Above] Hey, Frodo! Don't look now, but we think you're being followed.

LEGO THE LORD OF THE RINGS

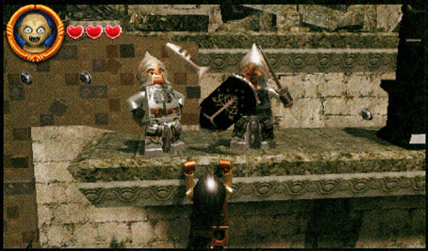
More like The Lord of the Blocks

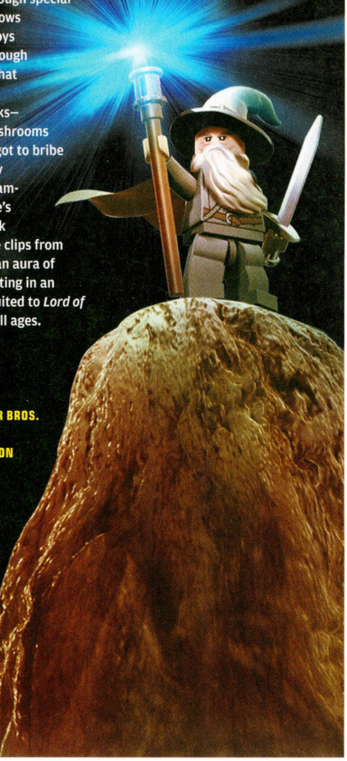
UNLESS YOU'VE BEEN living in a cave for the last several years, you probably know what to expect from the LEGO action games: loads of characters, a silly sense of humor, plentiful collectibles, tons of stuff to build and destroy, and a mix of platforming, puzzles, and combat. LEGO The Lord of the Rings follows this formula to a *T*, but does so, obviously, augmented by the unparalleled fantasy and adventure of JRR Tolkien's beloved universe.

Closely following the events of the *Lord of the Rings* films, the game begins with a prologue set in the Second Age, in which you'll control characters such as Isildur and Elrond to experience Sauron's defeat at the hands of the Last Alliance. The story then fast-forwards several centuries to the aftermath of Bilbo Baggins's 111th-birthday bash, putting you in the furry feet of Frodo and Samwise as they begin their legendary journey to dispose of the One Ring. From there you'll embark on an epic tour of Middle-earth, fighting Orcs and avoiding Ringwraiths as you visit locales such as the Elvish city of Rivendell, the Mines of Moria, Fangorn Forest, the fortress of Helm's Deep, and the enemy stronghold of Mordor itself.

Along the way you'll assume control of a plethora of heroes, each with abilities that you'll utilize to slay foes and solve puzzles. Samwise causes plants to grow; Gandalf levitates objects and shoots magic projectiles; Legolas uses his archery skills; Gimli smashes through special walls; Aragorn throws torches and destroys cursed objects. Though the zanier antics that ensue aren't from the movies or books—Frodo stealing mushrooms from Farmer Maggot to bribe his way past Merry and Pippin, for example—Howard Shore's rousing soundtrack and plentiful voice clips from the films provide an aura of authenticity, resulting in an experience well-suited to *Lord of the Rings* fans of all ages.

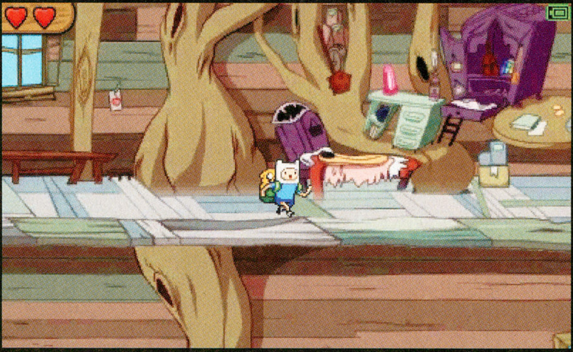
—CHRIS H.

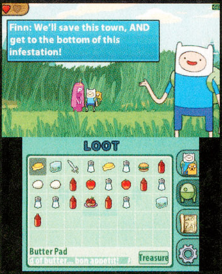




N3DS DS Wii

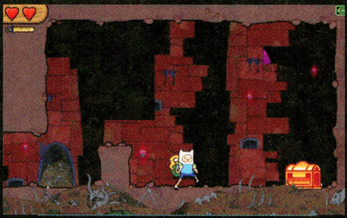
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **TT FUSION**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2012**





Finn: We'll save this town, AND get to the bottom of this infestation!

[Left] We're concerned that Finn and Jake have too much ketchup and salt in their diets. That can't be healthy.



ADVENTURE TIME: HEY ICE KING! WHY'D YOU STEAL OUR GARBAGE?!

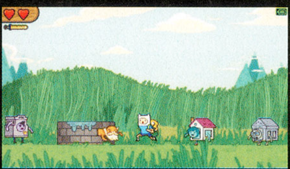
Finn and Jake refuse to give up their refuse.

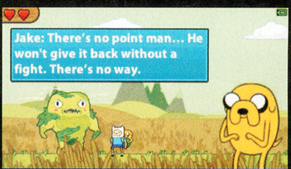
SPORTING ONE OF the most humorous titles ever, Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?! brings the wackiness and action of Cartoon Network's hit series *Adventure Time* to the Nintendo 3DS and DS. If you've missed out on the TV show, here's a rundown: it chronicles the adventures of the noodle-limbed human boy Finn and his best pal, a shape-shifting dog named Jake, as they travel through the whimsical Land of Ooo battling bizarre villains and saving princesses, many of whom are as odd as the bad guys (Lumpy Space Princess, anyone?).

In the game, our heroes go up against their most persistent foe, the incompetent Ice King, who has committed an egregious crime—trash theft. NES gamers will appreciate the game's structure, which is heavily influenced by Nintendo's classic Zelda II: The Adventure of Link. Finn and Jake explore an overhead map, and when they encounter an enemy, the perspective switches to a side-scrolling view where Jake's morphing ability lends itself to a wide variety of creative attacks. Food and condiments can be collected and mixed to form stat-boosting treats thanks to BMO, Finn and Jake's adorable sentient video game system, which appears on the N3DS or DS system's touch screen.

Pendleton Ward, the show's creator, is heavily involved in the game's development, ensuring that it will present the same quirky tone fans have come to love. *Adventure Time* devotees will also want to check out the collector's edition of the game, which comes in an exclusive SteelBook case that is styled like the *Enchiridion*, the legendary hero's handbook from the cartoon. Also included in the package are a replica stylus of Finn's Gold Sword, *Finn & Jake's Monster Manual*, and a poster map of the Land of Ooo. **—PHIL T.**

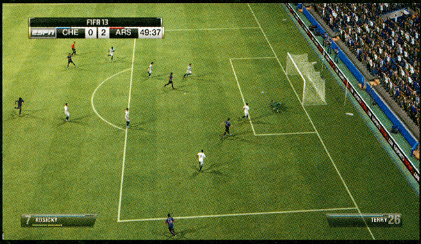
N3DS DS
PUBLISHER: **D3 PUBLISHER**
DEVELOPER: **WAYFORWARD**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2012**





Jake: There's no point man... He won't give it back without a fight. There's no way.

[Below] Maneuvering around the pitch should be a snap with the Wii U GamePad controller, as you can direct players with the touch screen.



FIFA SOCCER 13

Who says you can't use your hands in soccer?

BEFORE FIRING UP our FIFA Soccer 13 demo, EA Sports's Matt Prior—producer on the footie franchise for a decade-plus—tells us exactly what the game isn't: "It's not a port of the 360 and PS3 versions. It doesn't have all the new features.... It's more FIFA 12.5." While pointing out such a potential shortcoming might seem like a backwards way to begin a demo, Prior quickly follows up this full disclosure with a far more exciting claim: "This is a very, very different experience from the Wii versions.... It features the award-winning AI engine, next-gen physics, rendering, precision dribbling, tactical defending, and all that good stuff from the HD versions."

After explaining that limitations inherent to developing on brand-new hardware make it impossible for the title to sport all the series's latest bells and whistles—hence the "12.5" description—an enthusiastic Prior gets to the good stuff: "Over and above everything else, we want to utilize the Wii U console to deliver an experience you can only get on Nintendo's new hardware.... It would be criminal for us not to utilize it at a core level."

Proving actions indeed speak louder than words, Prior scoops up the Wii U GamePad and jumps into the title's Manager mode; more than a tacked-on minigame or a silly excuse to put fingerprints all over the GamePad controller's pretty, touch-sensitive screen, this system-specific mode is an integral inclusion for casual and core gamers alike. The tab-based feature allows unseasoned soccer fans to "manage" from the comfort of their couches, passively analyzing the game, interacting with match and player stats, and even making substitutions with what Prior calls "accessible point-and-press" controls.

Players craving a bit more action—but still afraid of getting their butts kicked on the pitch—can take this mode a bit further by

[Left] It never hurts to practice your dribbling and shooting skills.

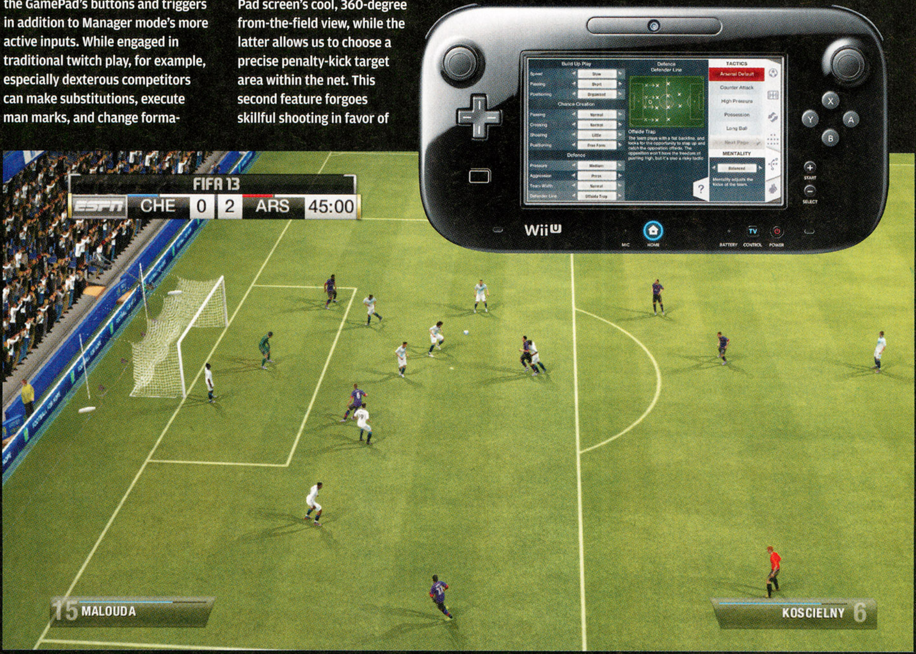
making player runs and passes with intuitive touch and trace inputs. And while one player is making high-level decisions, up to four players can engage in the on-field action using Wii U Pro Controllers. (Wii Remotes are also supported, but limit functionality.)

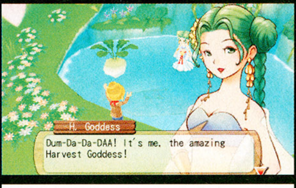
Soccer aficionados seeking the purest experience can stick with a Pro Controller or make the most of their game by simultaneously using the GamePad's buttons and triggers in addition to Manager mode's more active inputs. While engaged in traditional twitch play, for example, especially dexterous competitors can make substitutions, execute man marks, and change formations on the fly. As Prior points out, such actions are often ignored on the other consoles because they ordinarily require a match-halting trip to the pause menu.

Although this accessible yet deep use of the GamePad is the focus of our demo, we also get some hands-on time with what Prior refers to as FIFA 13's "lift-and-look" and "shoot-and-shake" mechanics; the former has us peering at the GamePad screen's cool, 360-degree from-the-field view, while the latter allows us to choose a precise penalty-kick target area within the net. This second feature forgoes skillful shooting in favor of a more minigamelike approach, but Prior promises the final product will be fine-tuned so GamePad users won't have an unfair advantage. Additionally, all touch-based features are optional and many will be unavailable for online play.

There's still lots to learn about this fresh take on the world's favorite sport, such as deep-diving details on modes and online functionality. Based on our first look, though, it seems EA Sports is catering both to the casual audience and to fans who've been blistering their thumbs on the FIFA franchise for years. Whether you're looking to learn the ropes as an assistant coach or call the shots as an experienced manager, we look forward to seeing you on the field when FIFA Soccer 13 launches alongside Nintendo's new hardware later this year. **—MATT C.**

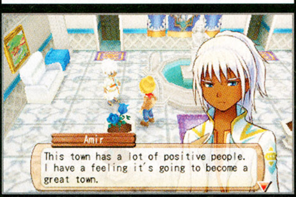
Wii U PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012**



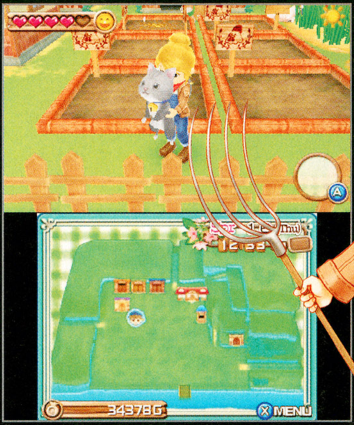

H. Goddess

Dum-Da-Da-DAA! It´s me, the amazing Harvest Goddess!

[Above] If you ever meet a goddess, be sure to bring her a turnip that's bigger than your head.


Amir

This town has a lot of positive people. I have a feeling it´s going to become a great town.



HARVEST MOON 3D: A NEW BEGINNING

Natsume goes back to basics to keep its beloved farm sim farm-fresh.

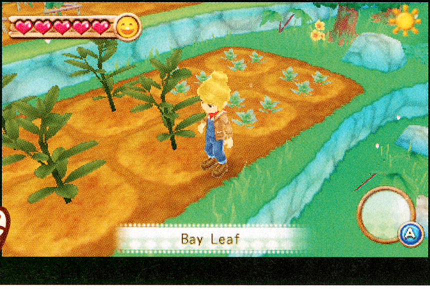
THIS YEAR MARKS the 15th anniversary of the peaceful Harvest Moon farming franchise, and with more than 30 titles released (including its various spin-offs) some might wonder if the series has run its course. However, Natsume's latest installment aims to return to its roots to start anew, combining the series's best elements with new gameplay features to create a novel Harvest Moon adventure.

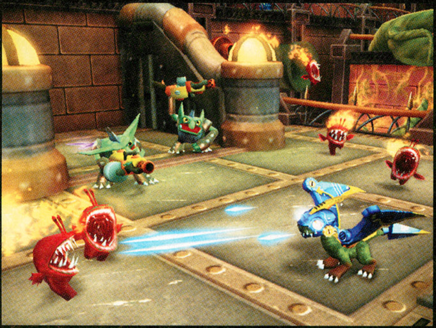
A New Beginning starts with the inheritance of your family's farmland as a coming-of-age present from your father. Upon arriving at your new homestead in Echo Village, however, you discover that the once-flourishing borough has nearly disappeared—everyone's leaving the town because there's no work. As the newest member of the community, it's up to you to infuse some life into its discouraged population.

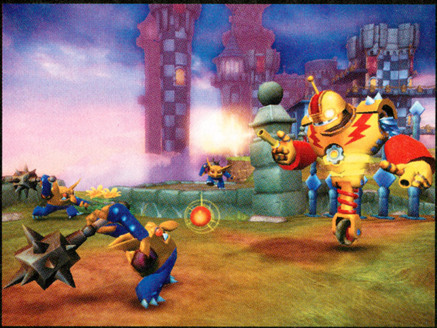
You have restoration goals to meet at the beginning of each season, for which you'll construct new buildings—such as a travel agency—to attract residents. You'll do this from your own workshop studio, where you can also craft objects from blueprints using materials found in the surrounding landscape. Not only can these objects be used to modify your farm, but you can place them around town wherever you see fit to add extra allure.

Customization is one of A New Beginning's central themes, starting with your character's name, gender, and appearance. Furthermore, you'll eventually be able to create and change your house's furniture, wallpaper, and flooring, and even modify the arrangement of the entire town at will. Other enhancements include new animals to tend to (such as llamas and yaks), new crops to grow for producing textiles, new love interests to pursue, and even a rideable robotic panda. With the game's homage to previous titles alongside long-desired gameplay elements, Harvest Moon 3D: A New Beginning might be the perfect package for series newcomers and veterans alike. —**CODY M.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS AQL**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2012**







SKYLANDERS GIANTS

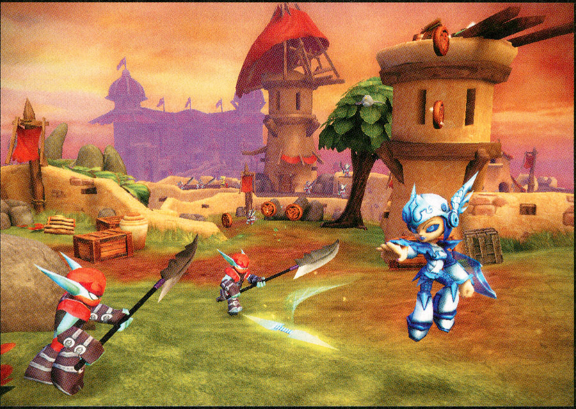
Large and in charge

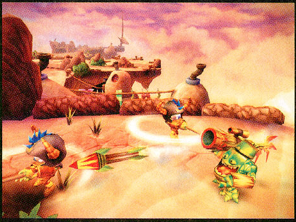
PICKING UP FROM where Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure left off, Skylanders Giants begins with (spoiler alert!) main antagonist Kaos—who has become the size of a real-world Skylanders figurine—awakening in a toy store on Earth. There he sees some Skylanders toys in a display case, along with a Portal of Power demo unit (the kind you would see in most major retail stores), which Kaos uses to reenter the world of Skylands—wherein he discovers an ancient army of robots called Arkeyans. The only way you, a Portal Master, can stop Kaos and his malevolent machines is with the help of the Giants, the first Skylanders, who originally defeated the Arkeyans long ago.

The Giants we played with in our demo were the fist-swinging Tree Rex (a Life Skylander), the finger-pistol-shooting Bouncer (Tech), and the hammer-wielding Crusher (Earth). There are five other Giants, each one representing a different element: Air, Fire, Magic, Undead, and Water. Releasing alongside the big fellows are eight new regular-size Skylanders, such as the potion-throwing Pop Fizz and the vacuum-gun-brandishing Jet-Vac, as well as 24 updated versions of old Skylanders, including Cynder and Trigger Happy. Don't worry, though: you can still use all of your previously purchased figurines in this title. And the level cap for every playable character in this game is 15, up from the original 10. Furthermore, each Skylander now has individual quests to complete; one of Tree Rex's quests is to defeat 1,000 enemies, for instance.

As in the first game, Skylanders Giants has you encountering enemies to dispatch, elemental zones to explore, and objects to collect. (There are *way* more collectibles this time around.) Additionally, you will meet folks who want to challenge you to Skystones, a minigame that's reminiscent of the Triple Triad card game from Final Fantasy VIII. The main adventure isn't the only thing that got new stuff, however; the head-to-head multiplayer mode has a new gameplay type called Ring Out, in which the goal is, obviously enough, to knock your opponent out of the ring. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **TOYS FOR BOB**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2012**

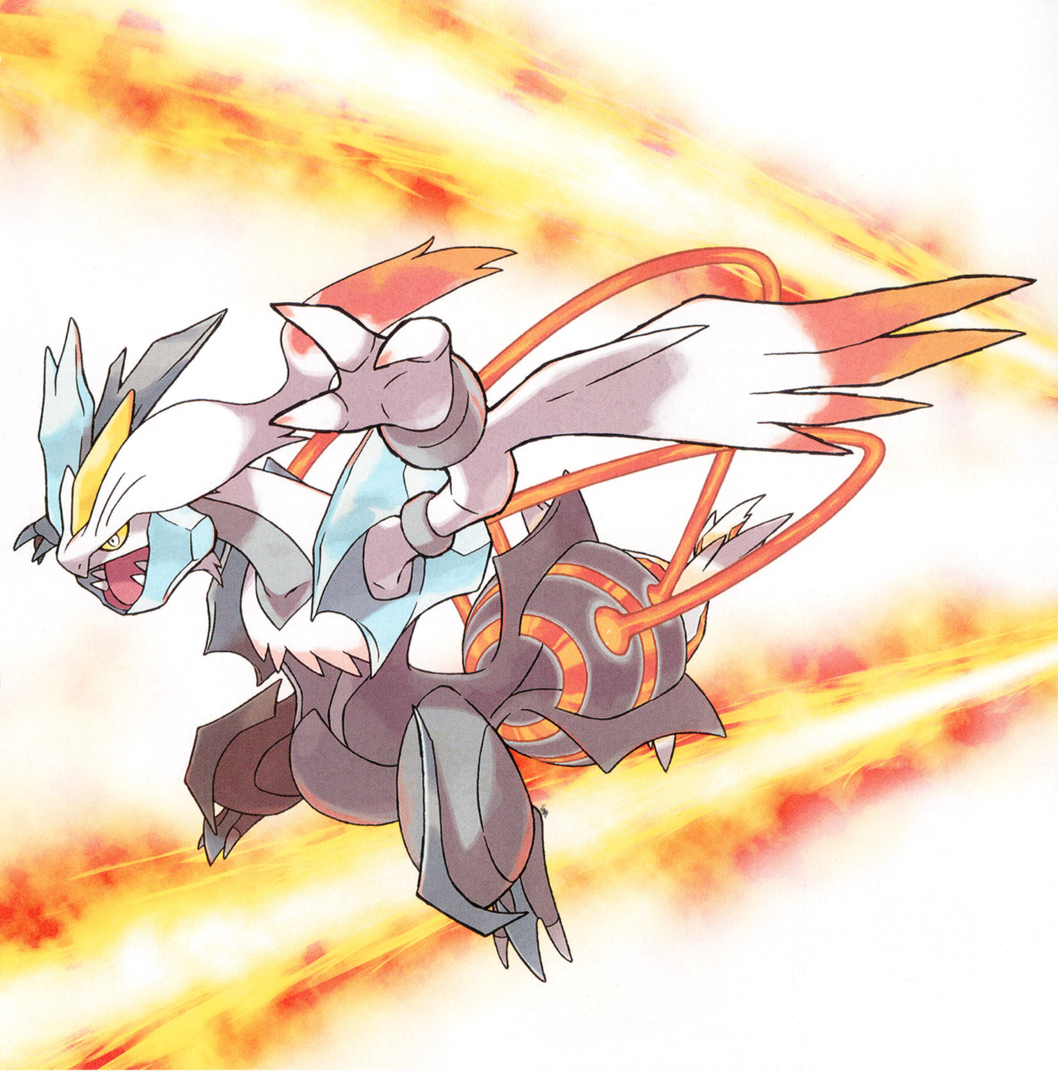




In addition to new characters like Chill [left], you can play as old favorites like Zook [above].

BLACK (AND WHITE) TO

In the series's first-ever direct follow-up, Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 reveal



THE FUTURE

a near-future Unova with new destinations, different Pokémon, and graver dangers.

BY **CASEY LOE**

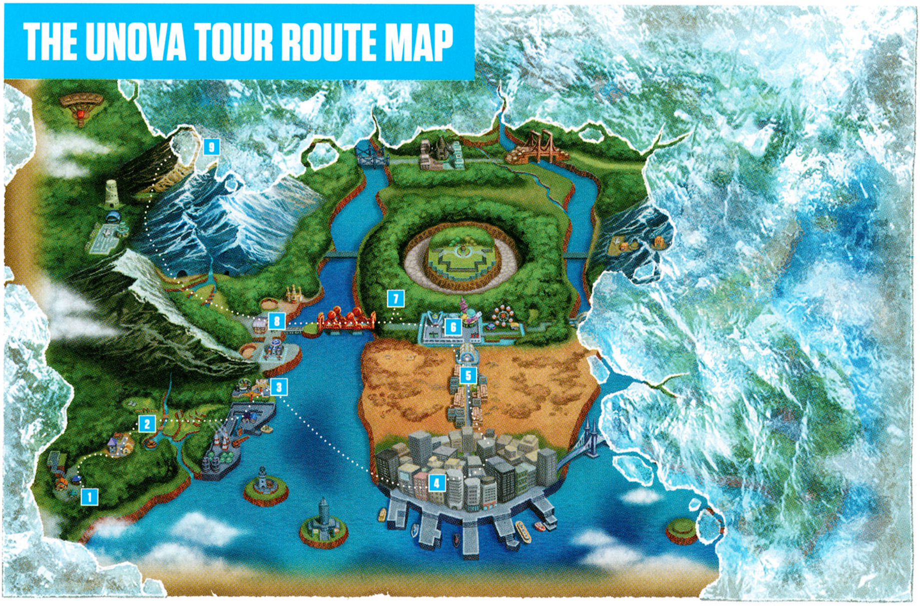
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **GAME FREAK** RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2012** **DS**

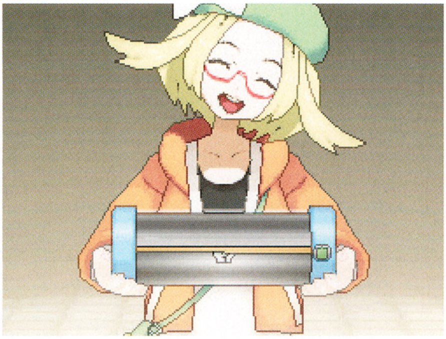
Since the start of the series, Pokémon releases have fallen into a safe and predictable pattern: each generation begins with two versions of the game, such as 2007's Pokémon Diamond Version and Pearl Version, and then a year or so later, a game like Pokémon Platinum Version comes out with different Pokémon placements, a few new features, and some minor tweaks. After seeing the pattern repeated for four generations straight, even the most casual of Pokémon fans figured that the 2011 release of Pokémon Black Version and White Version would be followed by an inevitable 2012 release of a "Gray" version or the like. But while fans took the pattern for granted, Pokémon developer Game Freak did not, and announced Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 instead.

So what exactly does it mean to slap a 2 onto an existing Pokémon title? The answer seems to be a game with a level of content that falls somewhere in between the director's cut-style third versions of years past and a brand-new Pokémon installment. Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 don't feature a new region, new starters, or any wholly new Pokémon, but do offer several new areas within the familiar region of Unova, the return of scores of classic Pokémon who didn't appear in the original Pokémon Black Version and White Version, and plenty of new activities and connectivity features. Additionally, the story is a direct follow-up to the previous games', set two years after the hero of those titles defeated the villainous Ghetsis, broke up Team Plasma, and taught the misguided N the error of his ways.

But players needn't be familiar with the lore of Pokémon Black Version and White Version. In fact, Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 are a great place for beginners to start, as each title explains all the series's mechanics without assuming any foreknowledge, and their huge quantity of wild Pokémon gives newcomers a great opportunity to build up an impressive roster for battling and trading. But are the sequels worth a return trip for Pokémon Black and White Version veterans? In our time exploring the two-years-later Unova, we've discovered plenty of good reasons to make a second visit. Just follow us; we'll show you around the place.

THE UNOVA TOUR ROUTE MAP



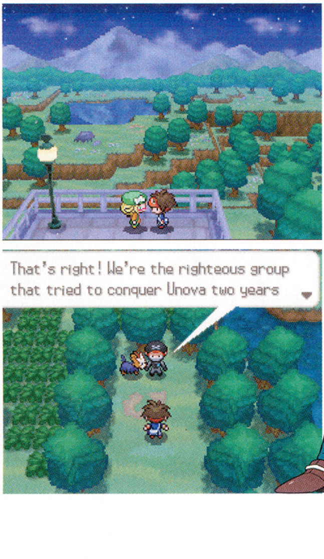


1 Catch Up With Old Friends in Aspertia City

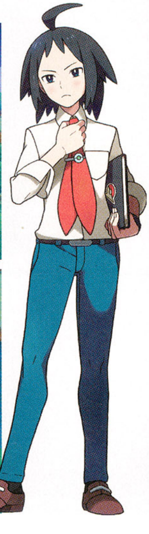
Our adventure begins in the newly developed Aspertia City, located in a corner of Unova that appeared to be little more than old-growth forest in the original Pokémon Black Version and White Version. Here, our brand-new protagonist meets Bianca, a friend and rival of the previous game's hero. Now two years older and a whole lot wiser, Bianca is assisting Professor Juniper in her Pokémon research and actively recruiting aspiring Trainers to catalog the scores of new Pokémon that are popping up throughout Unova.

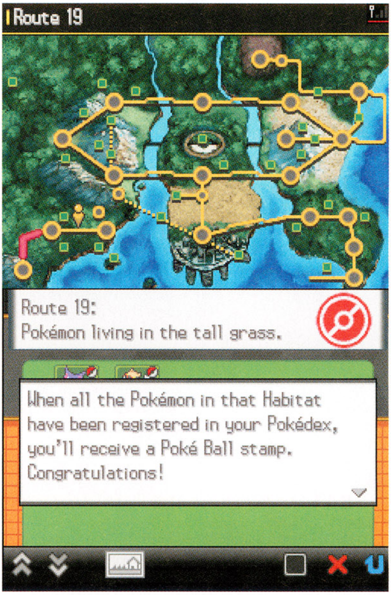
It's here in Aspertia City that we'll face the game's first challenge, a shiny new gym established by another old frienemy, Cheren. And you won't have to walk far outside of town before Pokémon League Champion Alder appears to show you the ropes.

Needless to say, there will be plenty of other familiar faces along our journey, and it's fun to see what's happened to everyone in the intervening years. That includes good old N, who disappeared after the previous game's ending, and the remnants of Team Plasma, who have split into two different groups with very different agendas.



That's right! We're the righteous group that tried to conquer Unova two years





Route 19:
Pokémon living in the tall grass.

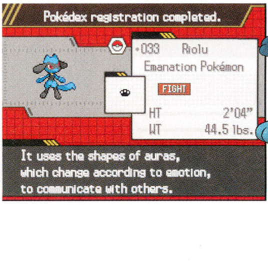
When all the Pokémon in that Habitat have been registered in your Pokédex, you'll receive a Poké Ball stamp. Congratulations!

2 Catch Some Old Friends of a Different Sort

As you travel through Unova's southwest, you'll begin encountering wild Pokémon from generations past, like Riolu, Psyduck, Azurill, and Mareep. Removing all of the classic Pokémon from Pokémon Black Version and White Version made those games feel fresh, but now that some time has passed, it feels great to have these old companions back and mixed in with all of the usual Unova Pokémon.

The returning Pokémon can be found throughout the game, in areas both new and old. The size of the regional Pokédex suggests there are around 300 Pokémon to be acquired in at least one version of the game, a record-size roster that offers a great variety of companions for players to choose from as they battle through the various challenges.

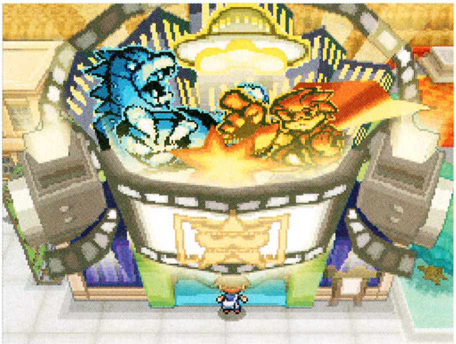
To help you keep track of it all, the in-game Pokédex has a welcome update: you can now view Pokémon by habitat, allowing you to select an area from the game and see all the Pokémon that you've encountered there. It won't show you ones you haven't yet seen, but it will mark the page with a Poké Ball icon when you've seen all the Pokémon that are native to the area.

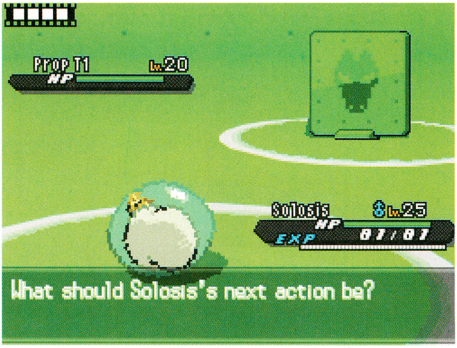


Pokédex registration completed.

033 Riolu
Emanation Pokémon
FIGHT
HT 2'04"
WT 44.5 lbs.

It uses the shapes of auras, which change according to emotion, to communicate with others.



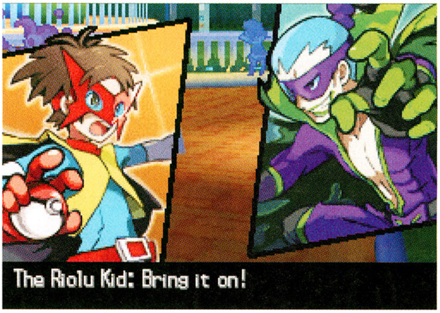


What should Solosis's next action be?

3 Give Show Business a Try at Pokéstar Studios

The original Pokémon Black and White Versions gave players a chance to dabble in musical theater, but come on—everyone knows the theater is just a stepping stone to the silver screen. It's time to get yourself and your Pokémon into motion pictures!

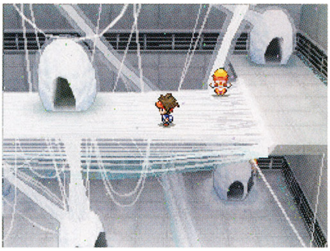
At Pokéstar Studios, you can review scripts, select a film, and try out some moves in green-screen mock battles. Sometimes the series of battles proves a challenge, and sometimes the scripts have little puzzles for you to solve, like a scene where you have to get an item from an exploding time machine, and it's up to you to figure out that the Trick command of your Pokémon co-actor is the way to do it. But for the most part, you won't know what the heck is going on—until you head up to the theater to see your finished movies, complete with fancy postproduction effects that turn the scenes you shot into a (somewhat) coherent story. Good performances unlock more script opportunities, and successful movies will bring new fans into the theater, who may reward you with special gifts.

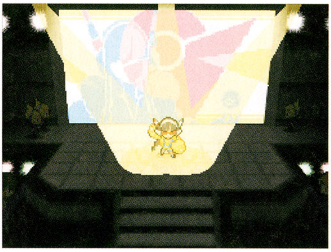


The Riolu Kid: Bring it on!

4 Challenge a Brand-New Series of Gyms

After defeating two new Gym Leaders in the southwest, you'll begin encountering familiar Trainers, like Burgh in the Castellia City Gym and Elesa in the Nimbasa City Gym. But even old gyms are new again: the Gym Leaders have different costumes, different rosters, and very different hobbies. Burgh has decided to embrace the spider aspect of his beloved Bug-type Pokémon, and has woven a new maze out of spider silk. Elesa's labyrinth of roller coasters is still up and running in Nimbasa City, but you won't find her at the end of it—she's moved the official gym to a building in a newly developed part of the city, where she and her minions perform an elaborate Pokémon-battle fashion show on a spotlight-swept catwalk. The quirky Gym Leaders and their idiosyncratic gyms promise to be as much of a highlight here as they were in the original Pokémon Black and White Versions.

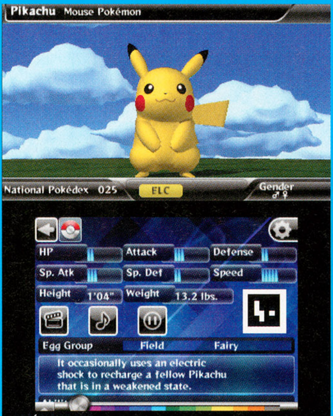




HANDS-ON WITH THE NINTENDO 3DS COMPANION APPS

Two new downloadable Nintendo 3DS titles offer a few perks for those who plan to visit Unova with Nintendo's newest handheld. First and foremost is Pokémon Dream Radar, which is set to go on sale in the Nintendo eShop the same day Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 release to stores. The game is a simple augmented-reality shooter that makes Dream Clouds appear through the handheld's camera. You can then shoot the clouds with a beam to earn Dream Orbs used to upgrade your gear, boost your range and power, and give you access to special abilities. The exciting part is that every now and then a Pokémon appears, and if you can use your beam to catch it before it escapes, you can export it into your Pokémon Black Version 2 or Pokémon White Version 2 saved file. Pokémon Dream Radar is the only way to catch the new Therian Formes of the Legendary Pokémon Tornadus, Thundurus, and Landorus, which have exclusive hidden abilities.

The second companion application is Pokédex 3D Pro, which is an upgraded version of the current Pokédex 3D application. It features more-detailed entries on each Pokémon and move, and serves up the National Pokédex ordering scheme introduced in Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2, as well as information about the new Pokémon forms that were introduced in that title.



Pikachu Mouse Pokémon

National Pokédex 025 ELC Gender ♂♀

HP Attack Defense

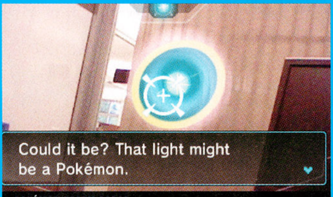
Sp. Atk Sp. Def Speed

Height 1'04" Weight 13.2 lbs.

Egg Group Field Fairy

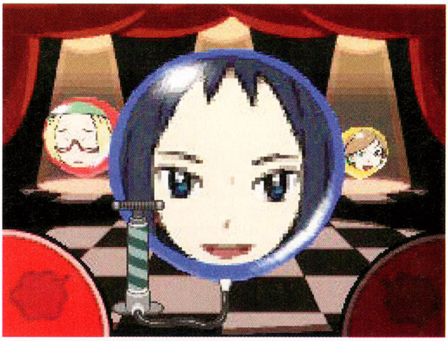
It occasionally uses an electric shock to recharge a fellow Pikachu that is in a weakened state.

POKÉDEX 3D PRO



Could it be? That light might be a Pokémon.

POKÉMON DREAM RADAR

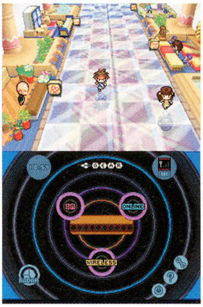


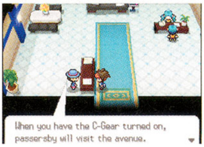
You can now play a pair of balloon related mini-games while you chat with your friends on the Xtransceiver. If you have a Nintendo 3DS, DSi, or DSi XL, you and your friends can use the attached camera to put your faces on the balloons!

5 Manage Your Own Join Avenue Shopping Mall

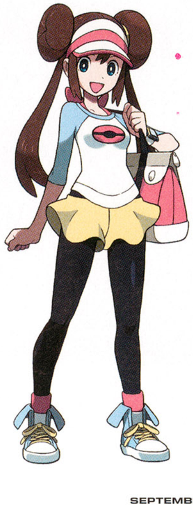
One of the most intriguing new features of Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 is a massive shopping mall that cuts straight through the desert in the southern region of Unova. At first Join Avenue is an empty building, but as you meet other players, you can develop it into a thriving marketplace.

After you use any of the game's ridiculously extensive array of communication features (online, Wi-Fi, infrared, carrier Pidgey, whatever) to meet other players for battling, trading, or co-op FunFesting (see point 7), those players' avatars will begin showing up in Join Avenue. Some of them might express an interest in establishing shops, and with your permission, they'll open raffle centers, beauty salons, dojos, markets, and Pokémon Cafes in your empty storefronts. Other visitors will simply express an interest in acquiring some good or service, and if you point them to the right store, that shop will level up, offering new merchandise and sweeter discounts for you!





When you have the C-Gear turned on, passersby will visit the avenue.

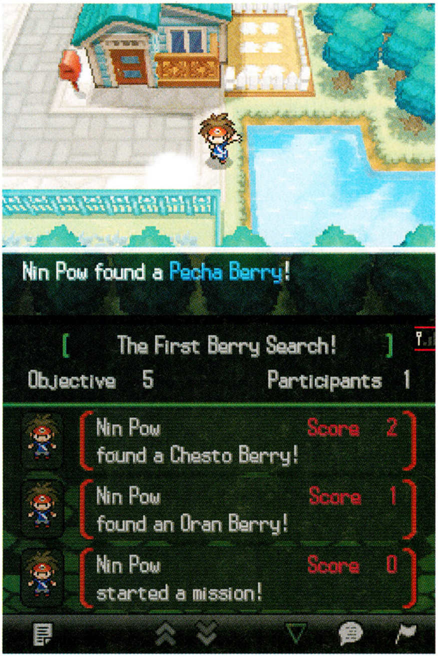


6 Hold a Wireless FunFest with 100 Pals

Pokémon Black Version and White Version introduced the Entralink, an online area where players could communicate, enter into each others' worlds, and perform simple missions to help each other. The Entralink remains in Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2, but it works quite differently. Players can now use the wireless capabilities of their Nintendo DS or N3DS to link with any number of other players as they pursue missions together—but instead of going into each others' worlds, all the players pursue the missions as they play their own games.

For example, if you choose a mission in which players have to find berries scattered throughout the game world, then each person can search for the little sparkles that indicate a hidden berry as he goes about his own journey, and the results are all tallied together. So if the goal is to find five berries and each of three players finds two before running out of time, the mission is a success for all participants. Or, if you choose a mission to catch a particular rare Pokémon within a time limit, then if any single participant succeeds, everyone wins. New missions can be unlocked by completing existing missions or by talking to NPCs throughout Unova.

As with the Entralink missions in Pokémon Black Version and White Version, players who complete missions are rewarded with access to Pass Powers that they can trigger to give themselves limited-time perks like HP regeneration or Exp. bonuses in combat. And players don't even need friends to get in on the action—the FunFest missions are playable solo.



Nin Pow found a Pecha Berry!

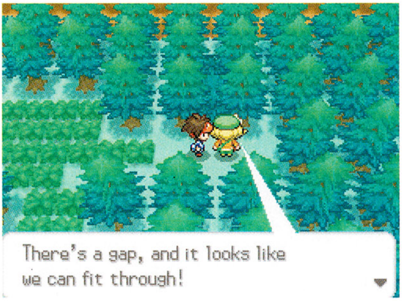
[The First Berry Search!]

Objective 5 Participants 1

Nin Pow Score 2
found a Chesto Berry!

Nin Pow Score 1
found an Oran Berry!

Nin Pow Score 0
started a mission!

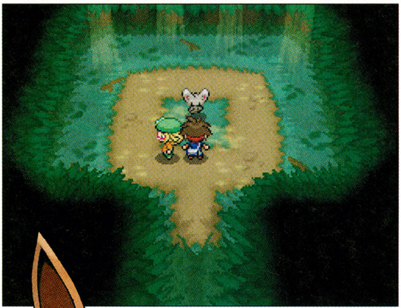


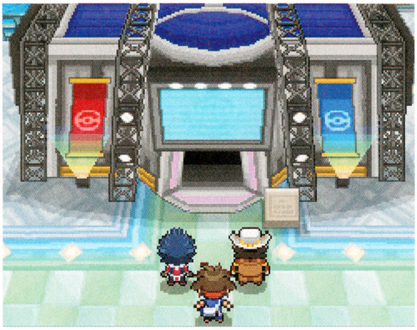
There's a gap, and it looks like we can fit through!

7 Catch Special Pokémon in Hidden Grottos

Even the old areas of Unova are full of interesting changes and new secrets, and that includes the simple route areas that connect the towns and landmarks of the game world. Whenever you're traveling a route and see two trees that look just a little too close together, you can examine them to reveal the entrance to a hidden grotto.

Hidden grottos contain either a single Pokémon or some sort of visible or buried item. The Pokémon can be battled and caught, and typically have a rare ability that you wouldn't find associated with that Pokémon in the wild. Best of all, even once you've cleared out a grotto, a new item or Pokémon will find its way inside it after a set amount of time passes. It pays to revisit the grottos often.

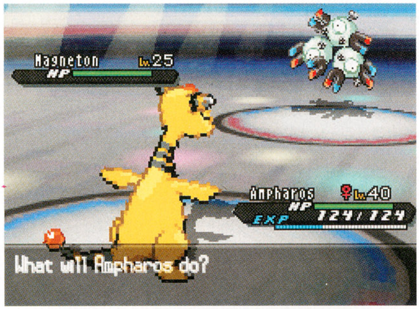




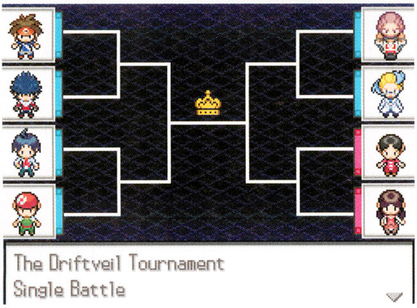
8 Compete in the Pokémon World Tournament

A massive new arena has been built south of Driftveil City to host the ultimate international Pokémon World Tournament. Participants are divided into eight-man brackets to fight through three rounds of single-elimination Single, Double, Triple, or Rotation Battles.

What makes the Pokémon World Tournament different from all the other game locations that host high-level battles is the scope of your competition; you'll face off against gym leaders, Elite Four members, and other notable Pokémon Trainers from every game in the series. There will even be special downloadable Trainers available via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection!



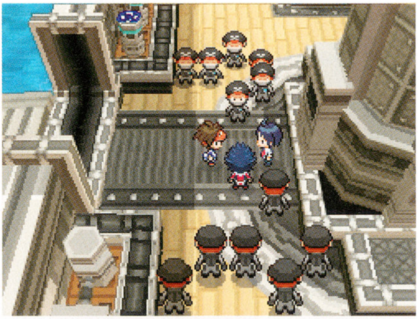
What will Ampharos do?

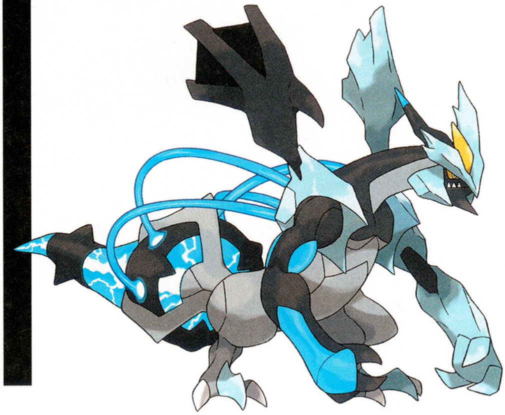


The Driftveil Tournament
Single Battle

9 Save Unova from Whatever the Heck is Going On Here

And here our journey ends, because the rest of Unova seems to be covered with a massive sheet of ice. We don't know what's going on exactly, but we're willing to bet it has something to do with the new, malicious iteration of Team Plasma that dresses like military commandos. It probably also is tied to the fact that the Black Kyurem and White Kyurem on the box covers are partially Ice-type Pokémon. Whatever the cause, if you're determined to save Unova, it wouldn't hurt to pack a sweater....





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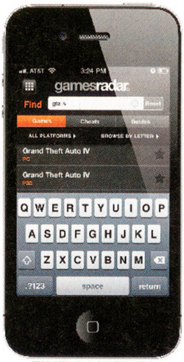
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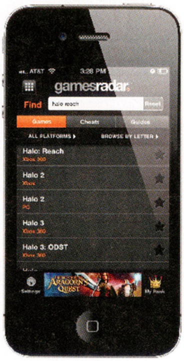
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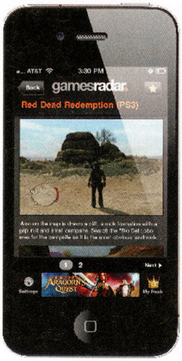
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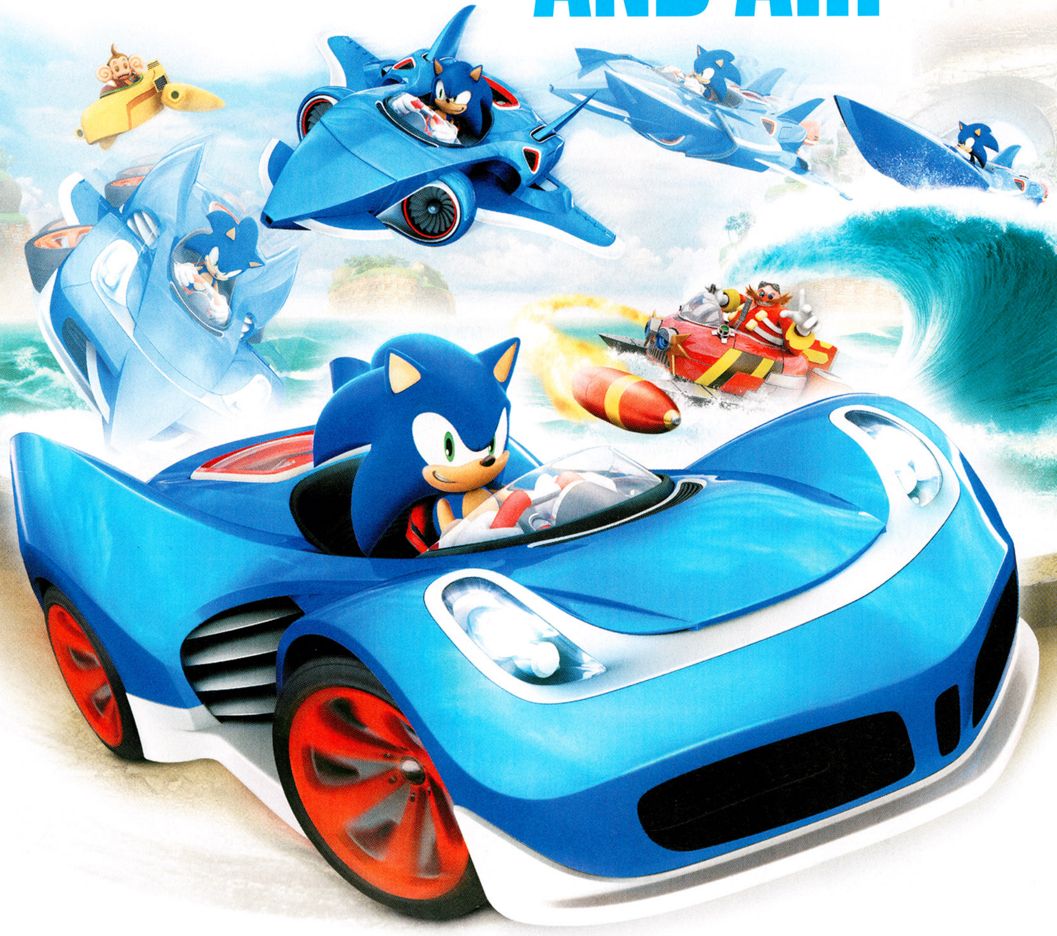
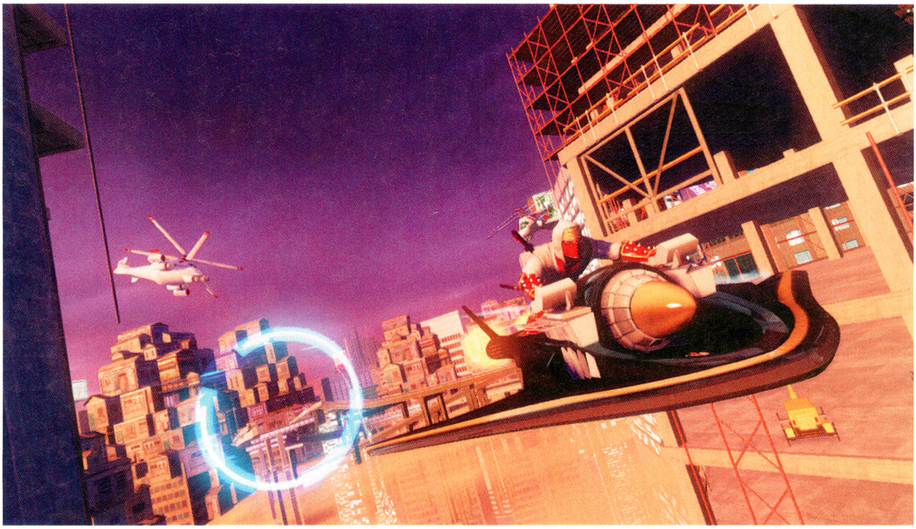
Sega's greatest heroes venture beyond the tarmac in **Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed.**



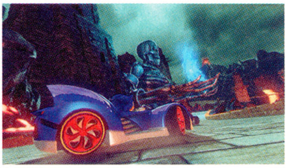
BY **STEVE THOMASON**

PUBLISHER: **SEGA** DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL** RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012** **Wii U**



Kart-style racing games are indisputably more fun when they involve beloved characters driving through familiar locales. Case in point: 2010's Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing, which culled material from more than two decades of memorable Sega franchises. The company's first serious foray into the genre proved a hit with critics and audiences alike, leaving many longtime fans with just one question: what took so long? Fortunately, sequel Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed is on the fast track and heading to the Wii U system and Nintendo 3DS handheld this holiday season. We recently took the console version for a test drive and found it not only packed with even more classic Sega goodness than its predecessor, but also bolstered by a promising new gameplay hook.

[Below] Yes, that is the skeleton from the character-select screen Golden Axe.



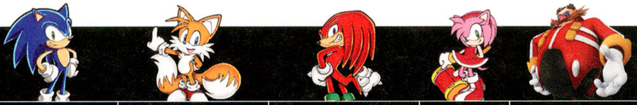
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

As referenced in the game's title, the vehicles in Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed can change into air- and sea-faring modes of transportation. That may raise a few eyebrows among those who have played Mario Kart 7, but the concept figures far more prominently here, and the differences in execution are pretty stark. (Plus, the folks at Sumo Digital are quick to point out that they were already working on the idea when Mario Kart 7 was first revealed to the public.) You'll spend significant time soaring through the skies or skidding across the water on these courses, so the developers went through a lot of effort to differentiate those experiences from the driving. The result is some nicely varied gameplay, and though we struggled with the aerial segments initially, we managed to get the hang of them by our third or fourth race. At that point, we found traveling by land, sea, and air equally enjoyable—a good sign.

The transformations take place automatically when you pass through special checkpoints, and each vehicle's conversion is accompanied by a cool little animation (plus a sound effect vaguely reminiscent of a certain

ALL-STAR CAST

Here are the racers announced by Sega thus far...



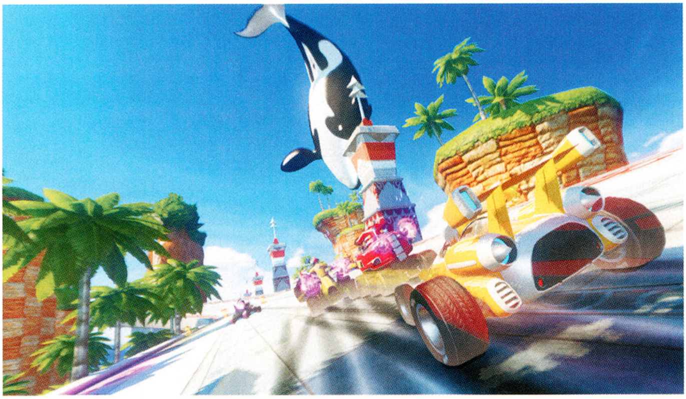
Sonic
Origin: Sonic the Hedgehog

Tails
Origin: Sonic the Hedgehog 2

Knuckles
Origin: Sonic the Hedgehog 3

Amy
Origin: Sonic CD

Dr. Eggman
Origin: Sonic the Hedgehog



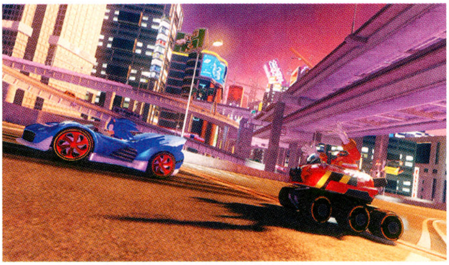
Hasbro toy line). Each course will involve at least two forms of travel, often necessitated by the level itself "transforming." On the Jet Set Radio-inspired Graffiti City track, for instance, a police helicopter swoops by and blows up an overpass during lap three, forcing the racers to go airborne. Other tracks feature similar terraforming events, which help keep the races interesting from one lap to the next while providing moments of impressive spectacle.

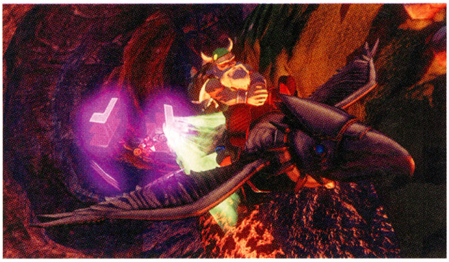
Even when things aren't exploding, Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed is a joy to look at. The environments are huge, with tons of trackside detail that hardcore Sega fans will recognize from classic games, and the new Sumo game engine allows for some lovely dynamic lighting. There were a few frame-rate hiccups during our demo, but the developers are confident they can lock in the action at a consistent 30 frames per second by the time the game ships.

SEGA AGES

Those aforementioned Sega fans (yours truly among them) got a big kick out of the previous game's roster of playable characters, and Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed delves even deeper into the publisher's storied history. The final lineup will include more than 25 racers, including newcomers Gilius Thunderhead from Golden Axe, Vyse from Skies of Arcadia, and Joe Musashi from Shinobi. Nintendo Power can exclusively reveal that Jet Set Radio's Gum will also join the festivities this time around. (For a full list of the characters announced thus far, see the "All-Star Cast" sidebar.) The Sonic franchise is well-represented, of course, but it's great to see Sega embrace the rest of its legacy so energetically. That's something the company does too seldom.

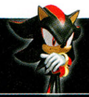
As in the first game, each racer gets behind the wheel of a unique vehicle. B.D. Joe drives his crazy taxi, Vyse pilots a scaled-down version of the *Delphinus*, and Gilius rides a stone bull that transforms into an eagle and a turtle—a clever nod to the Golden Axe stages that took place on giant versions of those same animals. The ultrapowerful, character-specific All-Star moves return, too, though you acquire them by different means than before. Rather than simply snagging a power-up, you must fill an All-Star meter by performing tricks or collecting stars scattered along the track. And now every All-Star move begins with your vehicle transforming into flight mode. Unfortunately, the moves had yet to be implemented in the build we played, but a Sega representative described a couple of examples for us. Beat's allegedly involves giant speakers emerging from his craft and scattering nearby foes, whereas Sonic's takes the form of a modified spin attack.



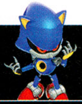


Just as all of the characters originate from Sega's back catalog, so do the venues. Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed will offer 20 raceways to choose from, and unlike in the first game, each is based on a completely different franchise (so you won't have three Sonic tracks this time, for instance). The five we've played thus far were inspired by Jet Set Radio, Golden Axe, Super Monkey Ball, Panzer Dragoon, and Sonic Adventure.

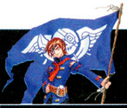
A soundtrack by longtime Sega maestro Richard Jacques takes the nostalgia to the next level, highlighted by fantastic remixes of classic tunes. The Sonic Adventure course features a new version of "Super Sonic Racing" that had us instantly grinning from ear to ear. Another neat touch: the post-race results for each track are accompanied by a unique musical cue ripped straight from the corresponding franchise. On the Golden Axe course it's the music from the original arcade game's ranking screen, and on the Sonic course it's the little jingle that plays after you finish a level in the first Sonic the Hedgehog.



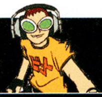
Shadow
Origin: Sonic Adventure 2



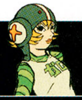
Metal Sonic
Origin: Sonic CD



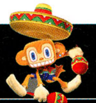
Vyse
Origin: Skies of Arcadia



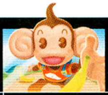
Beat
Origin: Jet Set Radio



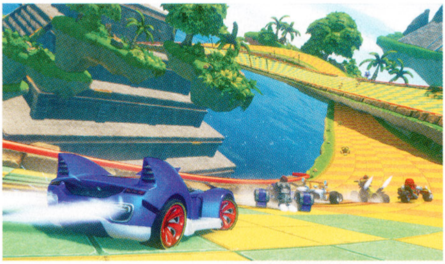
Gum
Origin: Jet Set Radio

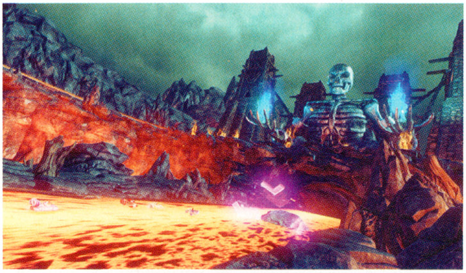


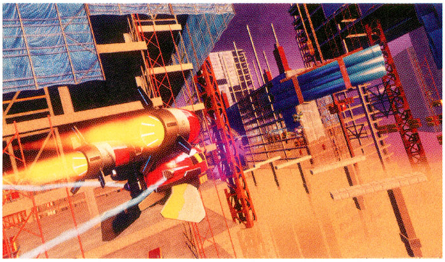
Amigo
Origin: Samba de Amigo



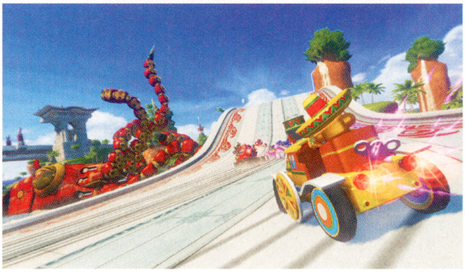
AiAi
Origin: Super Monkey Ball







[Below] You'll later have to avoid that giant robot squid during a boating section.



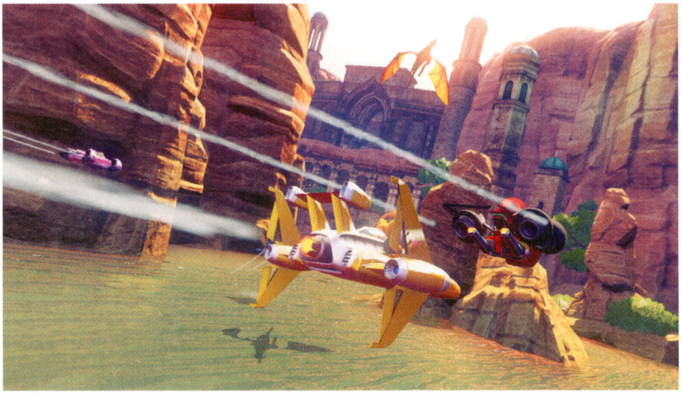
UNDER THE HOOD

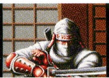
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed also looks to be getting the fundamentals right. Beneath the retro trappings, the tracks are well-designed and packed with alternate routes, varied obstacles, and hidden shortcuts. Controls feel a bit weightier than Mario Kart's—almost more in line with one of Sega's old arcade racers—but they're still tight and responsive, so that's not a bad thing. The game also offers a full complement of havoc-wreaking power-ups, and when you unleash one of them, the screen on the Wii U GamePad controller will follow its path of destruction.

The GamePad otherwise displays a top-down map of the track, or you can move the action to the controller's screen with the flick of a finger. Developer Sumo Digital teases that it has more things in store for the GamePad, but the studio isn't willing to spill the beans just yet. Nor is it ready to comment on Miiverse support.

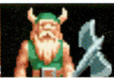
We can confirm that the game will offer online races, as well as a new single-player adventure mode that Sumo promises will tie the whole experience together better than the first game did. There's also an improved sense of progression as you earn EXP at the end of each race based on your performance, unlocking upgrades and modifications for your vehicle.

We'll have to see how everything comes together, but this looks like another promising entry in the Wii U system's holiday lineup. Look for more on this version in future issues, as well as a first look at the Nintendo 3DS offering next month.

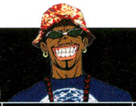




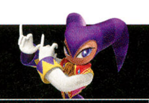
Joe Musashi
Origin: Shinobi



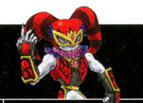
Gilius Thunderhead
Origin: Golden Axe



B.D. Joe
Origin: Crazy Taxi

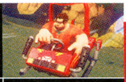


NiGHTS
Origin: NiGHTS into Dreams



Reala
Origin: NiGHTS into Dreams

Danica Patrick
Origin: Beloit, Wisconsin



Wreck-It Ralph
Origin: Wreck-It Ralph

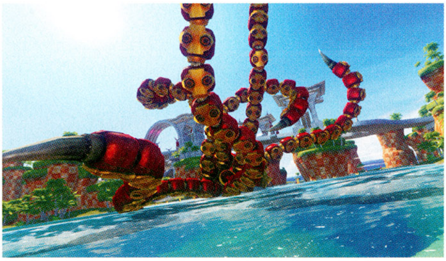
CREW CHIEF

To learn more about what fuels Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed, we spoke with Steve Lycett, executive producer at developer Sumo Digital. Lycett previously worked on Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing, as well as OutRun 2 and Codemasters' critically acclaimed TOCA Race Driver series.

NINTENDO POWER What was the impetus for the new transformation mechanic?
STEVE LYCETT Quite simply, to make something new and fresh. We felt we'd got an excellent foundation with the work we'd done on the previous games, but that we could do much more than just racing on land. We'd already sort of touched on planes with the hovering vehicles in [Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing], so once we decided to expand that into flight, racing on water was a natural extension. We also felt the character racing genre needed some shaking up, plus it opened the door to a lot of Sega IP that previously didn't make sense. Would it be fun to race on the ground in the Panzer Dragoon universe? Probably not, but when you can fly... suddenly it makes it a must-have!

Your team has touched on this in previous interviews, but could you talk a little bit about your reaction to the unveiling of Mario Kart 7?
Oh, the cursing you'd have heard if you'd been in the office when we saw that E3 conference! It didn't help we'd been working on the game for over a year when we saw that. However, I think when people play the game they'll see there is a big difference between our flight and Mario Kart 7's gliding, plus driving underwater isn't really the same as bouncing over the waves. I'd say we've got much more of a racing-game feel, too; we're in more realistic cars with weight and we're more about speed. It's more OutRun than kart racer. So yes, it was annoying, but when you play the game it's clear we had very different goals. I think people will appreciate that.

Were there any flying games and/or water-based racers that you looked to for inspiration or to get the feel right for those sections?
We're making a Sega game first and foremost, so we always look to Sega games as our reference points. Flight started off referencing classic arcade titles like After Burner and Galaxy Force II, though we've tweaked it to fit our game. Waterwise, we took something like Wave Runner, added a pinch of Wave Race, and then went to town. When I say water, of course, you race on all manner of liquids—lava included—so it's still again something I see as very fresh and quite unexpected in places!



How do you go about choosing which characters to include as racers and which classic games to represent with tracks?
This is tough! We always get complaints from fans that we've missed someone. We always have some that just *have* to be in there. For example, if we didn't have Sonic and Eggman, we'd really have the flaming torches coming to the office! Then we pick characters who fit the game we're doing; you know, who we can make cool vehicles for. We also make sure that any characters we pick are appealing in design to people new to Sega, too—all characters have to appeal regardless of nostalgia. That doesn't mean we don't sneak in some personal favorites, though! Trackwise, this time we've gone for variety, where we can use our flight- and water-based play in unexpected ways. Hence racing on lava. I don't think that's been done much before, but it's something we can do, as it's all about having fun!

While going through the Sega catalog for the above, are there any restrictions to what you can do or have you pretty much been given free rein?
To be honest, we've pretty much had free rein. There's one or two we'd love to have, but the games are so old no one is quite sure who owns the rights anymore! Again it's all about making sure we have a varied and interesting cast—and I like to think we've got the balance better than ever with this one.

Can you walk us through the process involved in turning a

NP'S WISH LIST

...and here are some we'd like to see.

Mario
Origin: Super Mario Bros.

ToeJam & Earl
Origin: ToeJam & Earl

Blaze
Origin: Streets of Rage

Segata Sanshiro
Origin: Parts Unknown

classic Sega game into a compelling kart-racing course? And are there any games you really wanted to draw from but just couldn't think of a way to make them work as a track?
Pretty much all the tracks we wanted to do have made it into the game. We start with a rough theme of what we want in a track—i.e., volcano, canyon, beach, glacier—and then we look at how we can work in the different racing surfaces. Some are easy. Take a beach, and you've got land and sea. Same for volcano: land and lava. For the glacier you could have ice that thaws to be water. Once we'd got that sorted out, then we'd look at an IP to base the track around. Really the land/air/sea play came first, then we'd work out the source game. It's that key to how the game plays. From there we'd do a rough block-out, check it with the IP holder to make sure they're happy, then polish it up!

How do you go about melding all of these wildly divergent properties into a cohesive whole? Or is that not terribly important in a game like this?
If only it wasn't important! We have to make sure everything hangs together as a whole, especially as we've got such a large cast who race together. First rule is we define a set vehicle footprint that all vehicles adhere to. That allows us to then define the course widths, radius of corners, and more. Then you have to find a lighting solution that makes them all look fine together on every track and in the front end. So a lot of time and effort goes into this. Hopefully it looks effortless when you play it!

How will players unlock new characters and tracks in the game? And do you have any plans to offer additional content through DLC?
Without giving too much away, we've got a big component of the game called World Tour. Here is where you can unlock most of the characters. We've also got some hidden in other modes too, such as finish a certain GP on a given difficulty, or complete this mode in a given way. It's like a trail of breadcrumbs. We're also spending a lot of time balancing this to make sure all players can get to all the unlocks. It's quite important to us, that.

The original Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing was well-received, but was there any feedback from players that prompted you to make changes in the follow-up? Any specific complaints that you've addressed?
We had a *huge* list of our own that we wanted to improve on, and we had more than enough feedback from a very vocal community on the forums! Key things that are improved [include] online features, more variety of tracks and characters, more of a metagame, and looking at making sure things are much more balanced. The bikes were likely a tad too good last time, but what can I say—I'm a biker, so I thought it was OK!

Why do you think the first game succeeded where so many other kart racers have failed?
I think there are a few reasons. First we have this huge rich Sega universe to draw from, and I genuinely think that even if you've not played many (or any!) of the source games, you still feel that history and variety when you play it. I think it was also a little bit more grown-up-feeling. We'd taken OutRun as our starting point, so it felt more racing game than karting game. I like to think people can feel the love, time, and care we put into making it, too! Plus, we made it as an arcade game, not as a console game. I know that sounds mad, but you didn't have to learn how to build a track, or 15 different buttons to play; it was super-approachable. That's a lot to say for easy-to-pick-up, tough-to-master arcade games!

The All-Star moves from the first game return, but rather than acquiring them via power-up, players now have to fill a special All-Star meter. What prompted that change?
Well, the All-Star moves last time were cool, but were almost a reward for playing badly. If you were a good player you never saw them (unless you were on the receiving end!). We still want them there to help players at the back make their way up the pack, but we've done a lot of work on getting a "fair" weapons system in to help that, so we figured it would be fun for you to "earn" an All-Star and then let loose. Plus we wanted them online, so we needed a mechanic to up the mayhem! Hence drift use, stunts, and weapons use contribute to the All-Star bar, which will eventually give you a move. Then watch out!

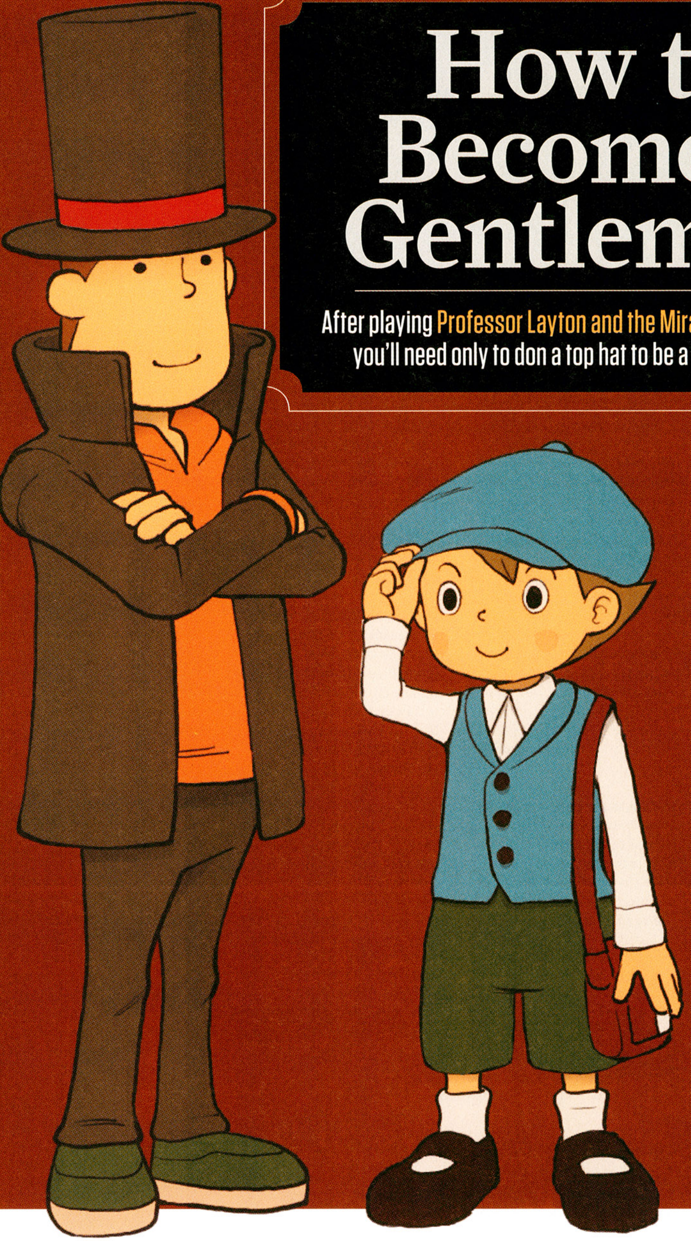
We understand that the single-player mode will feature more of an adventure-like progression. What can you tell us about that?
As I mentioned above, we have this World Tour mode where you can play through a selection of chapters—and with your friends in split screen, I should add—to play through some cool challenge-based events. You explore in the chapters to find new characters and open new content. Anything outside of this I'm not allowed to talk about right now!

What's been your approach to the Nintendo 3DS version of the game? Will it offer all of the same content as its console counterparts?
As always, we'll try and cram as much of the game as we can into the handhelds, so we'll keep as many tracks, characters, modes, and features as we can. It's just it might bulge out the sides of the lid as you close it!

Thanks so much for your time. Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed?
I just hope everyone enjoys playing it as much as we've enjoyed making it. We really do pour our hearts and souls into the game, and I'd like to think it shows!

How to Become a Gentleman

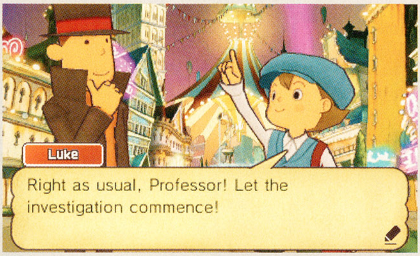
After playing Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask for N3DS, you'll need only to don a top hat to be a true gentleman.



Here's a puzzle for you: What can you do to become a perfect gentleman? That's a trick question, of course; there is only one perfect gentlemen—Professor Hershel Layton, and there is no way that you could ever be as gentlemanly as him. Don't let that discourage you, though. With a little effort—and the help of Nintendo and Level-5—you can still become an individual of class and refinement. Let the following lessons be your guide as you riddle your way into high society by way of Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask.

BY PHIL THEOBALD

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: LEVEL-5 RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2012 N3DS



Luke

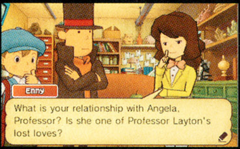
Right as usual, Professor! Let the investigation commence!

Look Your Best

A gentleman should always take pride in his appearance, which is something that Miracle Mask most certainly does. This is the first Professor Layton game to appear on the Nintendo 3DS handheld, and the graphics have been given a polygonal overhaul. Some might say a bit of the charm found in the previous four games' 2D illustrations has been lost because of this, but the new look allows Professor Layton, his apprentice Luke and his assistant Emmy, and the game's many other characters to be far more animated during dialogue sequences. Additionally, the 3D effect afforded by the hardware is extremely impressive. There are subtle uses of it, like the way the dialogue boxes seem to hover a bit over the characters, but it really shines in regards to the lush environments. Each scene is jam-packed with detail, and it all pops thanks to the stereoscopic 3D. The 3D effect is also put to good use during the game's high-quality cinematic sequences that play during important moments in the storyline.

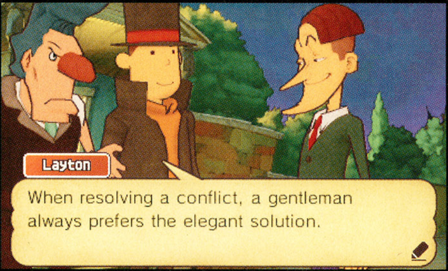
Tell Intriguing Tales

Nobody wants to associate with someone who is a bore, so a gentleman should always be ready to spin a captivating yarn for those around him. Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask begins with Layton, Luke, and Emmy traveling to the desert city of Monte d'Or after the professor receives a letter from an old friend named Angela Ledore. The city, which grew from a small oasis to a bustling center of activity in a mere 18 years, is mysterious enough, but things get even more bizarre when the team arrives during the anniversary celebration of the city's founding. Sudden screams interrupt a festive carnival, and partygoers are shocked to discover that some unfortunate souls have been transformed into stone. The culprit is the Masked Gentleman, a suspicious-looking character who has been terrorizing Monte d'Or with his so-called "dark miracles." His horrible powers (including the ability to sprout wings and fly) have been granted to him by the legendary Mask of Chaos, and it's up to Layton and his friends to uncover the truth behind the mask before the man who wears it destroys the city.



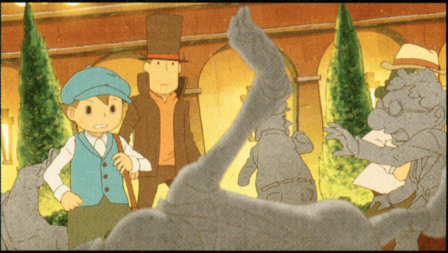
Emmy

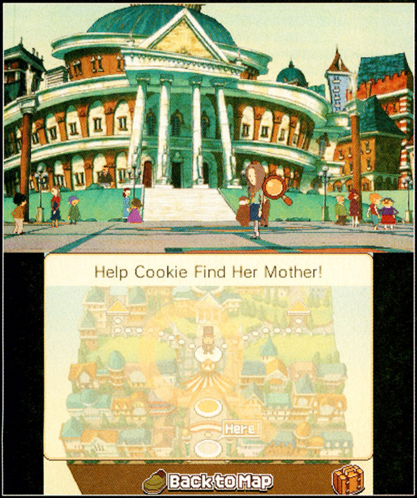
What is your relationship with Angela, Professor? Is she one of Professor Layton's lost loves?



Layton

When resolving a conflict, a gentleman always prefers the elegant solution.

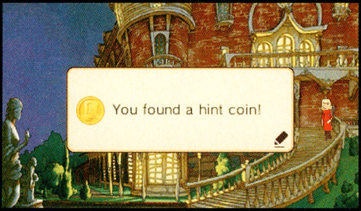




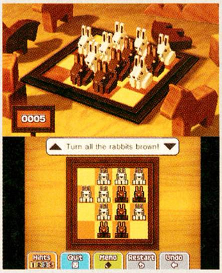
Help Cookie Find Her Mother!

Be Observant

How foolish it is to remain so focused on what is directly in front of you—you're bound to miss all sorts of wonderful and interesting things. Only by having a keen eye and a healthy zest for exploration will you be able to discover all that the world has to offer. In Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask, perusing a scene is more enjoyable than ever. When you enter a new location, tapping the magnifying glass on the N3DS system's touch screen allows you to enter investigation mode. When you move the magnifying glass over the screen, it glows orange when you've encountered something interesting. This makes it much easier to find people with whom to talk, new puzzles, and valuable Hint Coins. Occasionally the glass will glow blue, indicating that you can zoom in on that particular area. These close-up views reveal even more secrets in the vicinity. While examining each scene, keep an eye out for treasures to add to Professor Layton's collection. Perhaps something good will happen if you manage to find all of these rare items.



You found a hint coin!



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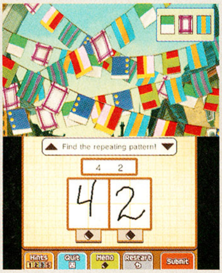
Turn all the rabbits brown!

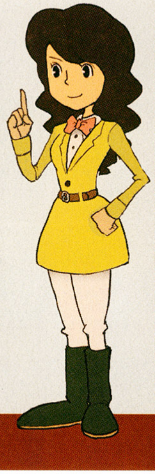


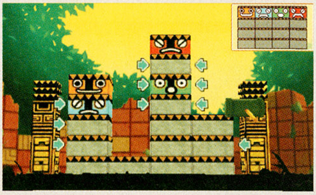
Find the repeating pattern!

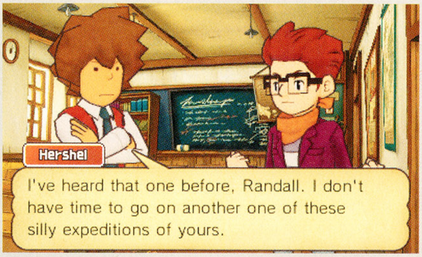
Maintain Your Wits

To properly resolve the many mysteries you're bound to encounter, it is important to maintain a sharp mind. A vast intellect and quick wit are perhaps the most important tools a gentleman can possess. Professor Layton knows that the best way to keep your brain in top shape is to never refuse a puzzle. Luckily, the world he inhabits sports a plethora of challenging brainteasers, and you're bound to find several of them by simply poking around an area or chatting with the local citizens. The puzzles test various skills, such as mathematics, observation, and spatial reasoning. You need a vast spectrum of knowledge to solve all of the game's conundrums. Don't worry if you get stuck, however. Help is available in the form of the aforementioned Hint Coins. By spending these little trinkets, you can unlock clues to the puzzle's solution. Each puzzle has four hints to purchase, with the final one practically giving away the answer. If you are truly stumped, it might be worth spending those Hint Coins, as incorrect answers cost you precious Picarats. Those are essentially points that indicate how difficult a puzzle is (tougher challenges are worth more, of course), and they are used to unlock bonus items in the alluringly named Top Secret menu. The more Picarats you save, the faster you can experience new goodies, so it behooves you to think carefully before you answer.

How about it? Better men than you have lost themselves in my nimble fingers.





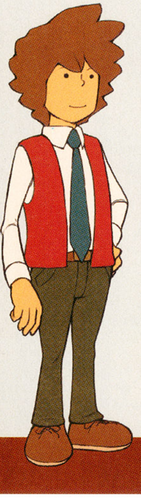


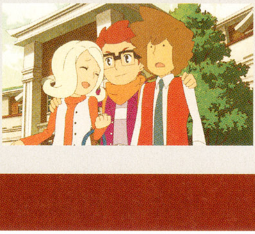
Hershel

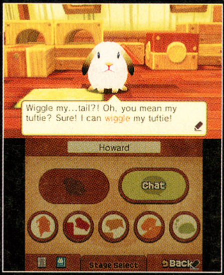
I've heard that one before, Randall. I don't have time to go on another one of these silly expeditions of yours.

Remember Your Roots

The Spanish philosopher George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Wise words from a noted gentleman, and certainly a lesson worth learning. Professor Layton clearly follows Santayana's advice, as after meeting with his old friend Angela, he reminisces about his life 18 years prior, when they were students attending Kingsbrook Academy. If you can believe it, there was a time when Hershel wasn't even interested in archaeology. It was his friend Randall who enjoyed learning about ancient cultures. All the more shocking is Layton's hairdo from years back, a wild mass of frizz atop his disturbingly top-hatless head. Playing through Layton's past isn't a mere flight of fancy, though. It was through Randall that Hershel first learned about the Mask of Chaos. The young man was obsessed with the artifact and hoped to find the true secret of its powers. Perhaps by calling upon his previous experiences, Professor Layton will be able to deduce his way out of his current predicament.

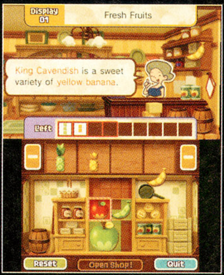






Wiggle my...tail?! Oh, you mean my tuftie? Sure! I can wiggle my tuftie!

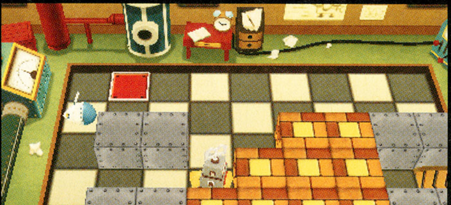
Howard

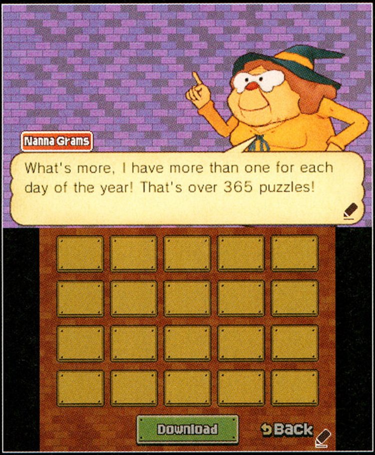


King Cavendish is a sweet variety of yellow banana.

Broaden Your Horizons

How boring one would be with no variety in life. Focusing solely on one thing dulls the mind and can make someone quite tedious to be around. Thankfully Professor Layton knows how to mix things up, so he and his colleagues regularly partake in a variety of minigames as they travel through Monte d'Or. The first minigame is called Robot, and it involves maneuvering a small mechanical toy through a maze. The trick is, the automaton can take only three steps at a time. You must make use of the walls, conveyor belts, and power-boosting keys to lead the robot to the goal. Just watch out for the deadly robot mice that roam the stage. In the Shop minigame, you are tasked with arranging items on a shelf to maximize their appeal to customers. Line up the items just right, and you can sell your entire inventory in one shot. Visitors to your store are likely to buy more items if they are placed next to identical items or items of the same color. Unfortunately, shelf space is limited, so fitting everything in the proper order requires careful planning. The final minigame is dubbed Rabbit, and it follows young Luke's quest to train one of the furry critters to perform a series of tricks that are eventually linked together in a series of plays. If the bunny performs well enough, it will earn a spot in the one-ring circus. Luke has the unique ability to converse with animals, so he is perfectly suited to this task. As you progress through the main story mode, new challenges for all three minigames will be unlocked, so you'll have plenty of opportunities to return to them throughout the game.

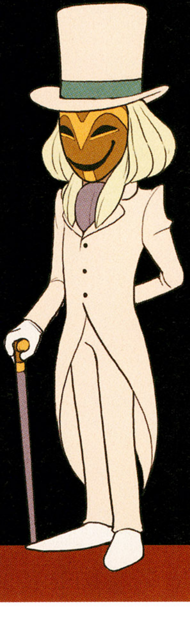


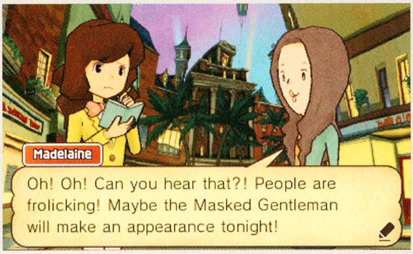

Nanna Grams

What's more, I have more than one for each day of the year! That's over 365 puzzles!

Challenge Yourself Daily

In order for your brain to stay in its top form, you must exercise it frequently. This may seem like common sense to you, but there are plenty of uncouth individuals who let their minds grow stagnant. How ungentlemanly! Fortunately for Professor Layton (and you), that fate is easy to avoid. The previous titles in the Professor Layton series have featured weekly downloadable puzzles that kept fans occupied well after the main quest had been completed. Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask, however, ups the ante with daily puzzles. Just enter the Bonuses section from the main menu to visit Nanna Grams. She promises more than 365 new challenges over the course of a year, which means you get a new way to train your brain every day.

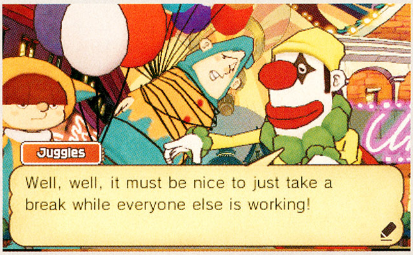



Madelaine

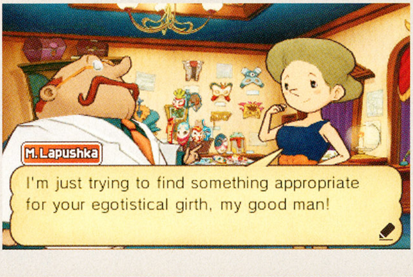
Oh! Oh! Can you hear that?! People are frolicking! Maybe the Masked Gentleman will make an appearance tonight!

Pay Attention to Others

Although Professor Layton may be the star of this game, a gentleman would surely remember that he is not the only player in this puzzling mystery. Miracle Mask provides a way to keep tabs on what all the characters are up to. During your adventure, you will discover special episodes depicting a brief scene that is occurring elsewhere while Layton tracks down the Masked Gentleman. You may see, for instance, a bit of Emmy's side investigation or a shopkeeper dealing with an annoying customer. These vignettes don't necessarily bring you any closer to your ultimate goal, but they do flesh out the game's world and make Monte d'Or seem that much more real.


Juggles

Well, well, it must be nice to just take a break while everyone else is working!


M. Lapushka

I'm just trying to find something appropriate for your egotistical girth, my good man!

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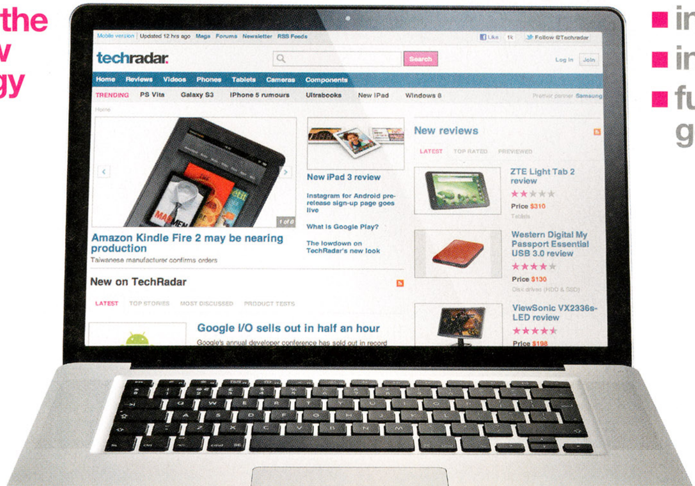
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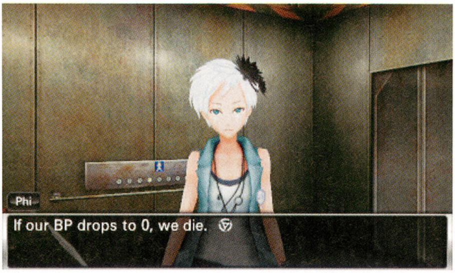
BETRAYAL IS A VIRTUE

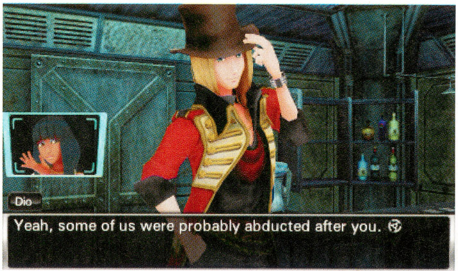
Unravel mysteries, solve puzzles, and stab your friends in the back in Zero Escape: Virtue's Last Reward for Nintendo 3DS.

BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES** DEVELOPER: **SPIKE CHUNSOFT** RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2012** **N3DS**

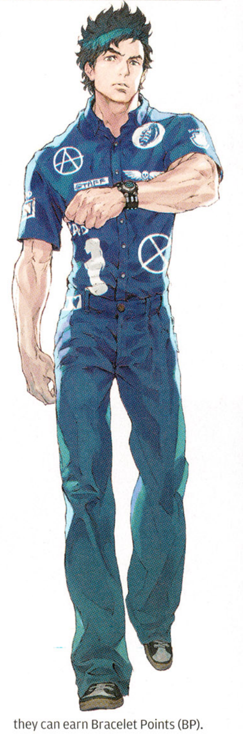

Phi

If our BP drops to 0, we die.


Dio

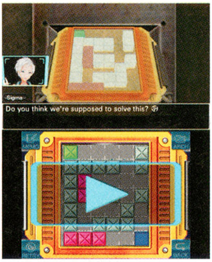
Yeah, some of us were probably abducted after you.

What would you do if you found yourself in a perilous situation, trapped in an unfamiliar place without any notion of why you're there? Would you stick to your ideals and work with questionable strangers to help everyone involved, or would you focus on yourself and do whatever it took to escape with your life? The choice may strike you as obvious, but the answers are never as clear as they seem in the M-rated graphic-text adventure Virtue's Last Reward for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.



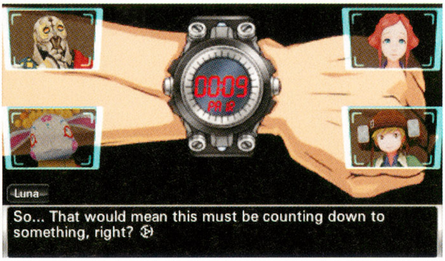
Like the previous entry in Aksys Games's Zero Escape series—the critically acclaimed sleeper sensation Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors—Virtue's Last Reward casts you in the role of a young man who is kidnapped and forced to participate in a bizarre game for no apparent reason. As protagonist Sigma, the last thing you remember is trying to start your car after a long night of college work; now you have a weird bracelet strapped to your wrist, you're confined in a strange complex, and you're faced with a seemingly neverending series of riddles and loads of questions about why you're there.

As in 999, however, you're not alone in your plight. An eclectic group of eight other individuals has been kidnapped as well: Phi, an innocent-looking but quick-witted girl; Quark, a young boy; Clover, a pink-haired young woman who was one of the characters in 999; Dio, who looks like a circus ringmaster but swears like a sailor; Alice, an exotic beauty who may be a secret agent; Tenmyouji, an old man who might be Quark's grandfather; Luna, an ordinary-looking woman with medical training; and K, an amnesiac garbed in an unremovable armored suit. Some characters are certainly more suspicious than others, but nobody is particularly willing to disclose personal information; each one is cloaked in secrets that you'll have to uncover as the story progresses.


Sigma

Do you think we're supposed to solve this?

Although none of the kidnap victims seem to know why they've been captured, they all quickly learn what they'll have to do to escape: overcome the Nonary Game: Ambidex Edition. As explained by gamesmaster Zero III—a cute but diabolical CG rabbit that appears via computer monitor—the Nonary Game is a life-or-death contest in which nine participants must team up and solve puzzles to uncover clues so that they can earn Bracelet Points (BP). The bulky bracelet on each unwitting competitor's wrist indicates the number of BP they've accumulated; each player starts with three BP, and your actions determine if you'll gain or lose points. Raise your BP to nine, and you'll be able to escape; let your BP drop to zero, and the bracelet will administer a lethal injection. Further complicating matters is the fact that the exit will open only once, and will stay open for only a few seconds; if

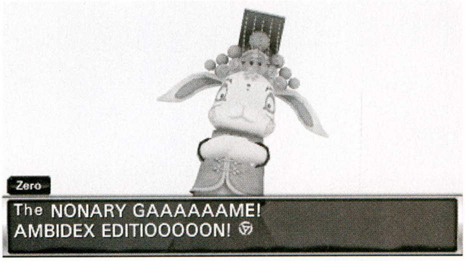


Luna

So... That would mean this must be counting down to something, right?

Sigma

Wh-What is this place?



Zero

The NONARY GAAAAAAME! AMBIDEX EDITIOOOOON!

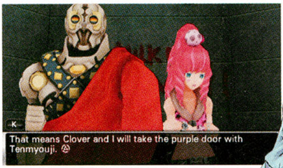
you want to ensure that everyone's BP reaches nine so you can all get out alive, you'll have to work for it.

TRIALS AND TREACHERY

Sigma

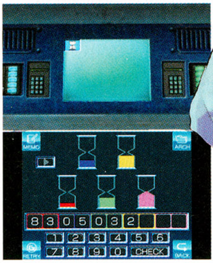
...What.

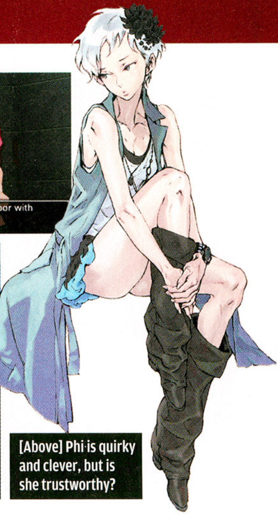
First things first, though—before you think about saving anyone, you'll have to escape from the small, elevatorlike room you initially find yourself trapped in alongside Phi. And to do that, you'll have to investigate every nook and cranny of your surroundings using either the system's touch screen or the Circle Pad and buttons. Unlike in 999, in which every scene was hand-drawn and static, the environments in Virtue's Last Reward are fully polygonal, providing you with more areas to explore and interact with. Only by inspecting everything will you have a chance of escaping. That pin on the fire extinguisher is actually a key. Those colorful handrails are, in reality, useful tools. And that poster of senior citizens and babies on the wall isn't just for decoration; it's a clue that will help you figure out which buttons to press. By using (and combining) items, deciphering hints, and operating various devices, you'll earn a code that lets you unlock a safe, which in turn provides a key that enables you to flee the room.



K

That means Clover and I will take the purple door with Tenmyouji.





[Above] Phi is quirky and clever, but is she trustworthy?

Of course, that's only the beginning. As the game progresses and the participants get separated into three-person groups (determined, primarily, by the colors of the bracelets' LCD displays), you'll find yourself locked within numerous other environments—a lounge, a garden, an infirmary, a security room, barracks, and more—each with their own puzzling challenges. In one case you may have to use obscure hints to learn a code word, whereas in another you might have to literally dig up clues and in another you'll be required to serve up a selection of color-coded beverages. Many of the puzzles can prove mentally taxing, but if you get stuck, don't worry; you can always switch on Easy mode for the duration of an escape so your partners will provide additional hints.

Only after you've escaped from a few rooms and acquired some special keycards does Zero III reveal the special component of the Nonary Game: Ambidex Edition that makes it different from the Nonary Game played in 999—you now have the opportunity to betray your partners. Solving puzzles and making escapes are only the means to an end; doing so grants you keycards that provide entry into special Ambidex Rooms, where you (and usually a collaborator) are given a simple choice regarding a fellow competitor: do you choose to ally or betray?

This so-called "prisoner's dilemma" can result in three potential outcomes. If both parties choose to ally, then you both earn BP; if you both choose the betray strategy, then no BP are earned or lost; but if the parties choose opposing options, the BP of the one who chose to betray will go up, while the BP of the one who chose to ally will go down. Sure, taking the ally approach might seem the most sensible for everyone, but what do the other participants think? Will they act for the good of the

VIRTUE'S FIRST REWARD

Still haven't had a chance to experience the Zero Escape saga? If not, no worries; Virtue's Last Reward's predecesor—Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors—is still readily available on Nintendo DS. In fact, Aksys Games is rereleasing the title with new packaging featuring "Zero Escape" branding to recognize the fact that 999 is now the first entry in a series.

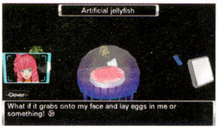
NINTENDO DS
Volume 1
ZERO ESCAPE
999
NINE HOURS · NINE PERSONS · NINE DOORS
MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
AKSYS GAMES

Phi

Oh, there you are. Good.

Quark

They can't lock away the soul! Once my body's gone, my soul can escape!



Artificial jellyfish

Clover

What if it grabs onto my face and lay eggs in me or something!

Luna

Something happened on the screen...

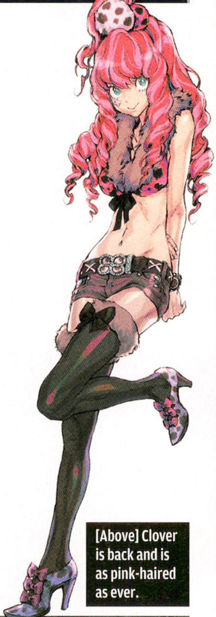
group, or do they have other, selfish motives? Considering that any of the other players could very well be the mastermind controlling Zero III and the Nonary Game, there's no way of knowing. Any outcome is possible, and if you get betrayed by someone you think is a friend, the reaper might not be far behind.

ESCAPING FATE

The choices you make in the Ambidex Rooms—as well as the decisions you make about who to team up with and thus which rooms you explore—can dramatically affect the outcome of the story. Following one branch might lead to the discovery of a dead body; another could end up with one of the participants contracting a deadly plague. An encounter with a humanoid robot sporting a Cockney accent, the threat of a supercharged antimatter bomb, and a string of sudden murders are all possible depending on your actions. In between the puzzle rooms, extensive visual-novel cut-scenes (complete with your choice of English or Japanese voice acting) allow you to witness how the gripping plot unfolds.

However, not every story branch can be completed on your first attempt; if you hit a roadblock or a dead end, you'll have to use the game's convenient Flow menu to warp back to a previous decision point to try other options. Following a different route will not only present new story elements and puzzles, but may also provide you with the information you need to overcome whatever obstacle was preventing you from progressing down a previous path. We're not entirely sure how that makes sense from a storyline perspective, but considering the fourth-wall-shattering metagame that tied everything together in 999, we're eager to find out.

In fact, we're looking forward to a lot of things in Virtue's Last Reward. Between its unique characters, compelling narrative, brain-bending puzzles, and confounding mysteries, there's a lot for fans of mature-themed games to enjoy. Prepare to be immersed in a world of trust and betrayal when this much-anticipated sequel hits stores this fall.

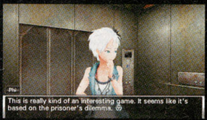


[Above] Clover is back and is as pink-haired as ever.

Luna

What's that?!

So it's a game of betrayal, then?



Phi

This is really kind of an interesting game. It seems like it's based on the prisoner's dilemma.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA

The "prisoner's dilemma" that the characters are forced to participate in throughout Virtue's Last Reward is one of the most heavily studied conundrums in history. It is named for the following scenario:

Two criminals commit a bank robbery together, and are caught by the police. The police have enough evidence to prosecute them on a minor charge, but not for the bank robbery. So they separate the two criminals and offer each a deal: pin the crime on your partner and we'll let you walk on the lesser charge. Therefore:

- If both criminals reject the deal and keep silent, they'll each do one year in jail on the lesser charge.
- If only one betrays the other, the betrayer will go free and the betrayed partner will serve 10 years for bank robbery.
- If both prisoners betray each other, both get prosecuted and do 10 years for bank robbery.

Collectively, the best strategy for the criminals is to stay quiet and serve the short sentences, but the best solution for each individual criminal is to betray the other. If Criminal A suspects Criminal B is going to stay silent, why should he do a year in jail when he can betray Criminal B and walk free? And if Criminal A thinks Criminal B is going to betray him, surely he'd want to betray Criminal B right back. Since Criminal B is doing the same math, each will inevitably choose to betray the other. The logic is sound, yet it will lead to the worst outcome for everyone.

It's a cruel paradox, and it only gets worse when you apply the prisoner's dilemma to larger problems, such as nuclear disarmament or prevention of global warming. During the Cold War, researchers used computer programs to simulate the prisoner's dilemma. AI routines battled each other 200 times, earning some points for mutual cooperation, more points for a successful betrayal, and no points for a mutual betrayal—just how points are tallied in Virtue's Last Reward.

ABSOLUTE ZERO

Who is responsibe for trapping innocent people and forcing them to compete in the Nonary Game? In the fictional world of Virtue's Last Reward it's the character known as Zero, but in actuality it's Kotaro Uchikoshi, the game's director and scenario writer. We recently caught up with Uchikoshi to gain behind-the-scenes insight on Virtue's Last Reward.

NINTENDO POWER When did you begin development of Virtue's Last Reward? Did you already have this in mind as a follow-up when you were completing 999?

KOTARO UCHIKOSHI If I remember correctly, I believe the Japanese version's development started around October of 2010. However, about six months prior to that, I started working on it on my own. So during those six months I created the setting, characters, and plot.

I created 999 as an independent piece of work, so when I was making 999 I did not have a sequel in mind. However, I was thinking that if I were to create a sequel I would definitely want to put Alice in it. There was a period of time where there was an idea that Alice would actually be the main character.

How closely does the finished game resemble your original concept for it? What ended up changing along the way, and why?

In the previous question I said, "I created 999 as an independent piece of work." However, that was not the case for Virtue's Last Reward. VLR was a piece of work I created with a sequel in mind. So from the point of view of the Zero Escape series, it is a second volume with a third volume in mind. It's kind of like *Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back* or *Back to the Future Part 2*.

So would that make VLR an incomplete piece of work? Will it just be the first half of a book? Will it leave the mysteries unexplained, and end with a major cliff-hanger? My answer to that is "No!" Everything that happens in VLR will be resolved within VLR. The identity of the game's architect, and the reason nine people were abducted and forced to play it... all of this will be revealed. All of the mysteries or questions that relate to this game are answered, but I did leave a few background mysteries unexplained. That is because I plan to explain them in Volume 3. Of course, I personally have not given up on it happening. In fact, my zeal to do [the third game] strengthens by the day. And it's not like my company has shot it down, either. A few of the executives are very supportive. Right now, though, we're just building the foundation for Volume 3.

So if you play VLR and think, "I want to play the next one," please go voice your opinion [online] and spread the word. You can also email Aksys or Spike Chunsoft as well. The more we hear from the players, the sooner we can make the third volume happen. I hope everyone understands and I humbly ask for your cooperation.

During our last interview, shortly after the US release of 999, you mentioned you were currently developing "a game that's even more geared toward the international audience than 999." Was that game Virtue's Last Reward?

There's one thing we figured out after we released the US version of 999, and that is that enjoying games and stories is universal; there are no boundaries. The fact that 999 received such great reviews alone is proof of that. (Of course, a big part of it comes from Aksys localizing it so wonderfully.)

So when we were developing VLR it is true that we had the international audience in mind, but we didn't really do anything in particular for it. All I did was write a story that I personally felt was interesting, and my Japanese staff implemented puzzles that we thought were fun to play with the mindset that this "fun" would be shared worldwide.

The only things we kept in mind were to not create a puzzle that uses Japanese, to make character names more codelike so they wouldn't seem to have specific nationalities, and to make it so the characters lived in the United States. Although these may be very simple steps, I feel like all of them combined to make a game that can be enjoyed internationally.

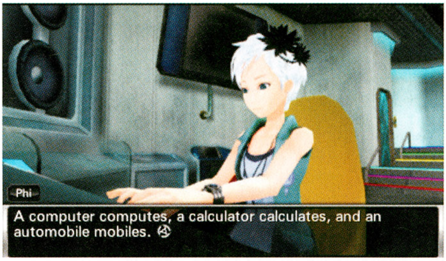
The story of 999 had a ton of brilliant and unexpected twists. Did you feel a lot of pressure to top that with VLR? And if so, do you think you succeeded?

To be completely honest with you, I didn't feel any pressure at all. During the plotting stage I foresaw that it was definitely going to be good. I felt more pressure with scheduling. This aspect I had to fight with. This so-called *time* ruthlessly cuts things that I know will be fun just because we don't have enough of it.

However, I think I managed to win this battle. This game will be filled with "brilliant and unexpected twists" until the very, very end, and the mysteries will attract mysteries and keep you wondering. I hope you're excited for this.

In retrospect, what aspects of 999 were you unsatisfied with, and how did you attempt to rectify those flaws in VLR?

In VLR we completely resolved the complaints we had with 999 about having to play the same things over and over. We implemented the flowchart which allows you to freely jump to a specific scene of a game you've already played, so you do not have to worry about being forced to



Phi

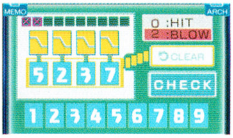
A computer computes, a calculator calculates, and an automobile mobiles.

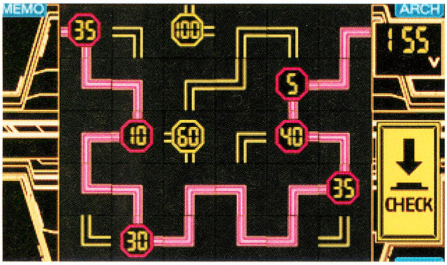
Sigma

Wh-Who's there!?

Sigma

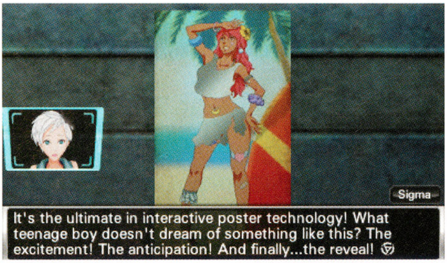
They're handcuffed together.



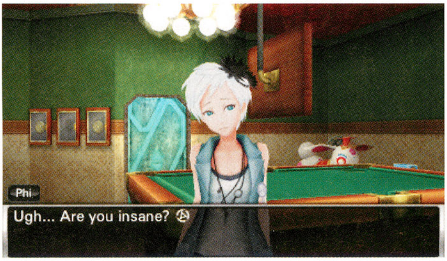


read the same text over and over.

We also improved the fast-forward skip function. It should be more speedy and comfortable. You no longer have to hold down a button for it to skip ahead. Additionally, VLR will allow you to set the difficulty of your escape. Each escape will default to Hard difficulty, but if you get stuck you can switch to Easy. In Easy mode, your companions will give you hints about how to solve a given puzzle. This is another improvement over 999. In 999 we received comments such as, "I already knew the answer but the character kept babbling about it, which was a major turn-off." That is why we decided to implement the difficulty system for VLR. This way people who are good at puzzle games as well as people who aren't good at them can still enjoy the puzzles in VLR.



It's the ultimate in interactive poster technology! What teenage boy doesn't dream of something like this? The excitement! The anticipation! And finally...the reveal!



Ugh... Are you insane?

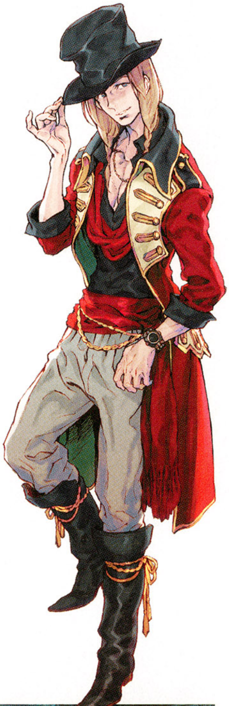
Why did you decide to change the graphics style from dot-pixel art to 3D models?

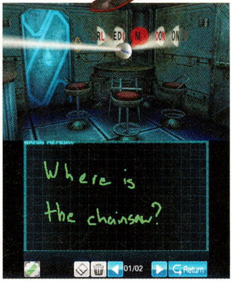
We moved to 3D because of the unique capabilities of the Nintendo 3DS. As you all know, the system's top screen can show images in 3D. Of course, it's possible to make 2D pixel art three-dimensional, but we began development just after the N3DS was announced, so we felt that in order to make the best use of the 3D functionality we needed to use 3D models in the game. When we were creating the 3D models we made every effort to not lose the charm and appeal of Kinu Nishimura's designs. I hope you all enjoy Kinu-san's 3D designs.

How specific were the requests you gave to character designer Kinu Nishimura? Did any of her takes on the characters surprise you?

I did give Kinu-san references like, "This character is like this Japanese actor." Of course, I also gave her detailed explanations of each character's personality and physique.

However, I stressed those people were simply references. I told her, "Don't let those images constrain you. Just use them as reference and do what you do best." Take K, for example—the character in the suit of armor. I told her, "My image of K is Iron Man." What did we get? We got a design where he looked like he was some kind of monk from Tibet. That alone shows how amazing Kinu-san's creativity and design sense are. Had I given her a full rundown of exactly how I wanted each character to look, I don't think we would have ended up with such awesome designs. I am, once again, truly impressed with her work.





Where is the chainsaw?

From the main cast of 999, why did you choose Clover to return?

VLR and 999 are closely related, or "spiritually related." I guess I wanted to make a new story that takes place in a new stage, so I decided to make completely new characters.

However, if I created all new characters, then we'd sort of lose that "spiritually related to 999" factor, so I should pull a character or two from 999. That's when the favorite-character poll came into play. Clover was first place in Japan and second place in the US, so I figured that if so many people love her, I might as well bring her back. That's how we decided to bring her onboard for VLR.

Will we find out what happened to the remaining characters?

Clover will tell 999 fans a little bit about what happened to everyone, so make sure to look for it. If you haven't played 999, though, you can probably just skip it. You don't need it to make sense of the story in VLR.

What sparked your interest in the "prisoner's dilemma," and why did you decide to make it central to Virtue's Last Reward?

What I found most intriguing about the prisoner's dilemma is that making what appears to be a logical decision from a personal standpoint is actually not in the best interests of the group *or* the individual.

Don't you think these types of things happen all the time? It really happens, right? But most of the time people don't realize they're in a prisoner's dilemma.

For example someone says, "For the benefit of the company, the logical thing to do is to take measure A." Since it is indeed logical, no one opposes it, so the company will work toward A. However, as a result the whole industry is put at a disadvantage and therefore the company also finds itself at a disadvantage. This sort of thing happens all the time, but people still don't realize that it does. I wanted to shine a spotlight on that problem.

If you were in Sigma's shoes the first time he was asked to make a betray-or-ally decision, which would you choose, and why?
This isn't necessarily my opinion, but when VLR was released in Japan, a player gave us the following opinion: "If it were me, I would make everyone promise to choose ally. If anyone betrayed, then the rest of us would restrain them."

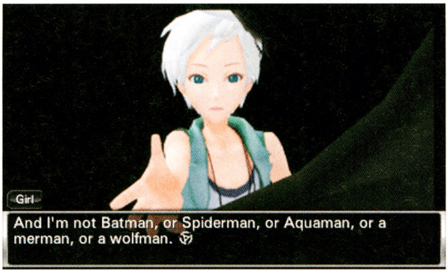
At first I thought, "Oh, that makes sense!" But then the more I thought about it, the more I saw flaws in that plan. For example, let's say K chose to betray. Would the rest of the cast be able to restrain him? Or what if the majority chose to betray? Could the minority successfully restrain them?

At the end of the day, that suggestion is just wishful thinking, and assumes that most people will choose to ally. As for what I would do... If Clover was with me, I guess I wouldn't really mind being locked in there. [Laughs]

Have you suffered any personal betrayals that helped inspire VLR?
I feel bad bringing up Japanese politics here, but I felt like I was totally betrayed by the Democratic Party in Japan. [Laughs] I also felt betrayed when I bought an electric razor and then got all cut up by it and started bleeding all over the place. But that was just the other day, so I don't think it inspired VLR.

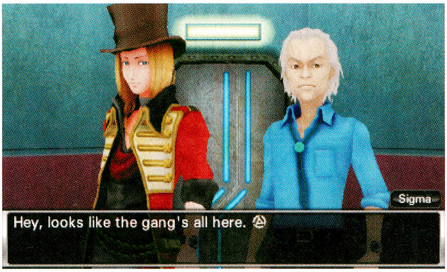
Fortunately, I have great friends, and my work environment is wonderful, so I've never really had to deal with betrayal. I suppose there was one time I felt betrayed, though: when my wife and I were dating she was so nice to me, but as soon as she had a child she turned into a demon. So I guess that was a sort of betrayal.

Why did you decide to allow players to leap from decision point to decision point before even completing the game?
As I said, it was initially because of complaints regarding having to reread things in 999. That was the inspiration for the flowchart. But it felt kind of boring if we just added a flowchart, so we put some meaning behind it. It's not just a tool for getting around the game; it's actually part of the mystery of the game.



Girl

And I'm not Batman, or Spiderman, or Aquaman, or a merman, or a wolfman.



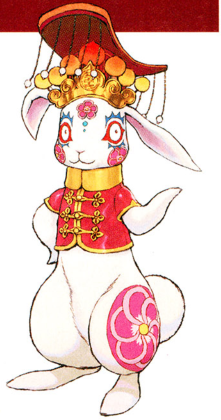
Sigma

Hey, looks like the gang's all here.

The dual screen of the Nintendo DS seems to have inspired certain story elements in 999. Were there any features of the N3DS that inspired aspects of VLR?
There aren't any console-inspired systems in VLR like there were in 999. We have, however, put in some systems and ideas that can only be expressed in video games. If I told you anything more than that, it would be a spoiler, though, so please just play the game and enjoy it firsthand!

With the steadily unfolding mystery and all of the possible BP scores for every character, there are so many things going on at once in Virtue's Last Reward. How did you keep track of it all during the scenario-writing process?
I managed and kept track of the Bracelet Points and scenario locks with Excel. The Bracelet Point chart is designed so if you change one voting result (ally or betray) it will reflect the overall changed numbers. When I was writing the story, I referenced this chart. So if I were to say, "I originally planned on having this character choose ally, but I think it's better if they choose betray" or vice versa, I could adjust the results accordingly. Changing that value would affect any branches connected to it, so I had a lot of times where it wouldn't match up to the ending I wanted. Keeping things consistent was very hard, and I suffered a lot because of it.

On the other hand, though, there were times where interesting situations that I hadn't thought of would show up. When that happened, it was a lot of fun. I think the players will enjoy it as well.



In our previous interview, you said you had to make all the characters in 999 adults because it would be difficult to have a child facing death. Yet VLR features a 10-year-old boy who can (presumably) lose the game and die. Why the change of heart?
Well, first off I just wanted to write a story between an old man and a child. And given the overall balance of the characters, I guess I just kind of had a feeling that having a child as part of that cast would be a good fit. It is true that having a child face death is very difficult, but I think that very difficulty adds a sort of fun to the overall game. That doesn't really seem fair, I know.

But let's say that your opponent in the Ambidex Game is an adult male—like, say, Dio. You might not think twice about betraying him, but what if you were playing against a child, like Quark? Would you be able to betray him so easily? There are a lot of variations to the Ambidex Game. In order to heighten the dramatic tension, it was vital to have an innocent child at risk. Although whether or not he's as innocent as he looks, I don't know....

Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us about Virtue's Last Reward?
After we released VLR in Japan we had users take a survey on it. Of the people who responded, 93.9% of them said they were more than satisfied with the game. We also asked if they would buy a sequel or follow-up game, and 97.8% of them said "Yes."

Those numbers are not fabricated at all. There were 1,247 people in the survey, which I think is a pretty decent number. Numbers will never betray you. I promise you will be satisfied. Or do you still not believe me? I suppose that's up to you.

"THANK YOU MARIO! BUT OUR PRINCESS IS IN ANOTHER CASTLE!"

—TOAD, SUPER MARIO BROS., 1985

NINTENDO POWER

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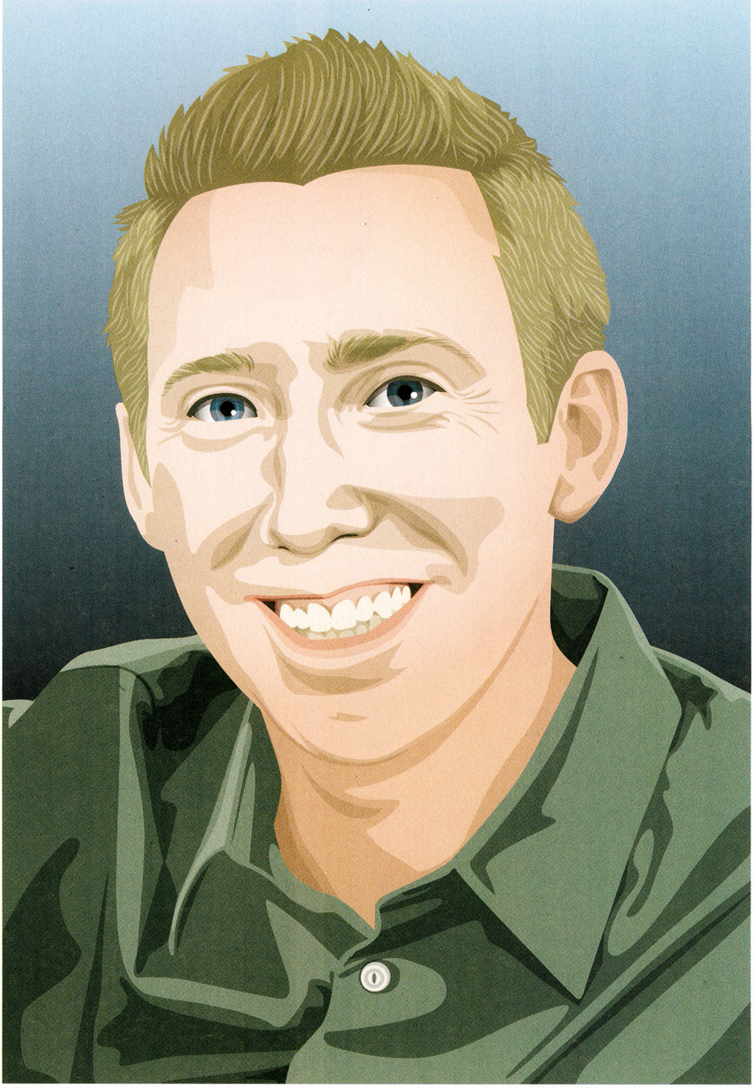
Future
MEDIA WITH PASSION

63

Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
March 20, 1980

BIRTHPLACE
Los Angeles, CA

POSITION
Creative director, THQ

BEST KNOWN FOR
Designing wrestling games, feuding with The Miz

FAVORITE FOOD
Pizza

CURRENT PROJECTS
WWE '13

Cory Ledesma

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

How would you like to control the destinies of some of the world's most popular (and muscular) entertainers? That's what Cory Ledesma does on a daily basis as the creative director of THQ's WWE wrestling titles. Ledesma has worked on the WWE franchise for more than 10 years, and it's up to him to guide the direction of the series, plan new features, and work with teams of designers, programmers, animators, modelers, and producers to turn the athletic spectacle into a game that can be appreciated by fans around the globe. When it comes to video games, Ledesma is the king of the ring.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you get into the video game business?

CORY LEDESMA I started out working as a video game tester part-time at THQ while I was going to college. I was completely fascinated with game development through my limited exposure with it while I was testing, so I worked as hard as I could to get on the core production team and work on games that I actually loved, like WWE. [Over] the last 12 years, I've continued to work my way up to become the creative director on the WWE games.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Looking back, I was completely clueless. I don't think I had any idea what I wanted to do or what I might be good at doing. I probably gave my mom a good scare being so clueless throughout school. I don't think it ever crossed my mind that I could actually grow up and work on video games and do that for a living.

How long have you been a wrestling fan? What got you interested in it?

I've been a wrestling fan my entire life. When I was a kid, I would watch my favorites like "Macho Man" Randy Savage, Hulk Hogan, and the Ultimate Warrior. My dad actually used to pretend that he was "The Million Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase, and we would wrestle one another. I realize now that he loved being the bad guys, and like most kids, I would love to be the good guys. I'm sure I would be a John Cena fan if I was a kid watching today, but back then, I was really into it. I had the Tonka wrestling buddies, and my friends and I would love to watch the Royal Rumble and act out the matches. I have very fond memories of watching WWE as a kid. I even got hurt a few times performing Macho Man's diving elbow. Kids—don't try this at home!

What are some of your favorite superstars that you've worked with over the years?

I've been very fortunate to meet and work with many WWE superstars, divas, and legends over the years, many of whom were my idols growing up, such as Hulk Hogan and "Rowdy" Roddy Piper. I remember him being such a laid back guy, speaking so calmly and casually before we started filming. But when that camera got turned on, a switch flipped, and he turned into a wild man. He was yelling and pushing me. I got to see two sides of him that day, and it really made me appreciate him as a performer. I've also been able to sit down and talk video games with Triple H. He has a strong creative mind and had a ton of great ideas about games.

How did your rivalry with The Miz get started? Where did that come from, and how did it feel to see a sign about it on Raw?

Ah yes, The Miz—my pompous and arrogant archnemesis. A couple of years ago, The Miz began doing press tours with us to promote the latest WWE games. Naturally, he would never shut up and tried to steal the spotlight whenever he could. He would hurl insults at me and complain frequently about his character not having high enough stats in the game. Eventually, I had enough of his constant yapping and started firing back at him during the interviews so he would quit his belly-aching—and that is how the rivalry really started. I have to admit he's won most of our one-on-one battles over the years, but I control his character's stats in the game, so in the end, I win the war. It was great to see the WWE Universe backing me up by creating a "Miz Fears Ledesma" sign on WWE television; that most definitely made my day. But all jokes aside, The Miz is awesome, and I always enjoy the time I get to spend with him.

Have you ever worked directly with Vince McMahon? Is he as intimidating as the fans have been led to believe?

I've had one meeting with him that I can recall. He definitely has an aura about him; it's intimidating and intriguing at the same time. I half-expected him to come into the meeting with his entrance music on, walking in with his classic power strut and then firing me in dramatic fashion in that very meeting, but I did end up making it out alive! In all seriousness, Mr. McMahon loves the WWE video games and had nothing but praise for the work we've done over the years. I think he was really impressed with how detailed the character models were in the game.

What's the most difficult thing about working on WWE titles?

Staying up-to-date with what is going on in the WWE is a difficult challenge for us. The WWE is constantly changing and evolving. It's a very fluid company, which is one of the reasons why WWE is so great. That fluidity can be difficult for us to keep up with since our development lead times are so long, but we've been able to manage that by offering our fans tools that enable them to keep their WWE game up-to-date on their own, such as Create-a-Superstar and WWE Universe mode.

What are some of the craziest requests you've received from fans regarding the kind of content they want in the games?

We've definitely received

GAMEOGRAPHY

Not surprisingly, Ledesma's résumé consists almost entirely of wrestling games—he's worked on more than 20 in all! That's a whole lot of hard-hitting, in-your-face, mano-a-mano grappling action.

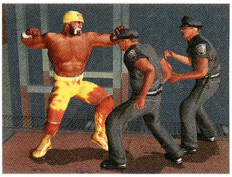
RACE AGAIN
EXIT TO GARAGE
QUIT

CHAMPIONSHIP MOTOCROSS FEATURING RICKY CARMICHAEL
PLAYSTATION, 1999
TESTER

The Rock
Big Show
Kane
Triple H

WWF SMACKDOWN!
PLAYSTATION, 2000
TESTER

WWF SMACKDOWN! JUST BRING IT
PLAYSTATION 2, 2001
ASSISTANT PRODUCER



WWE WRESTLEMANIA XIX
GAMECUBE, 2003
ASSOCIATE CREATIVE MANAGER

Power Profiles

our fair share of crazy and bizarre requests over the years, the craziest of which I don't think I can mention in this article—ha! But the safe, PG-rated ones I can mention are usually related to pushing the limits of what we can do to the extreme, such as having 30 superstars in the ring at one time.

A lot of wrestling fans would probably do anything to be in the position that you're in. Is there any advice you could give to someone who wanted to be in your shoes?
I hate being cliché, but I guess I would tell them to work hard, follow their dreams, and never let someone else tell them they can't do it. If this truly is your passion, there is a clear path to take to get there. If you're feeling like you're not a naturally gifted game designer, just remember that hard work beats talent when talent fails to work hard.

What would you add to the WWE titles if you didn't have to worry about approvals or budgets or anything like that?
I would probably want to have every past and present WWE superstar and every wrestling move known to man in the game. I would just want it to be a complete encyclopedia of wrestling. It would be the ultimate wrestling game with every match type, superstar, arena, weapon, etc. That would be a dream WWE game. It would probably take 10 years to make with a gargantuan budget, but how much fun would that be to make?!

Would you like to work on other kinds of games aside from wrestling products if you could?
I would love to eventually work on an NBA game. My second passion is basketball, and I always want to work on something that I'm passionate about.

How have things changed in the gaming industry since you started?
Games are so much bigger all around than they used to be. The amount of in-game content, project budgets, team sizes, and complexities of designs have all grown substantially in the last 10 years. Also, the bigger the games get and the more expensive they become to make, the riskier it is to create them. But on the positive side, the quality of games being put out is getting higher and higher each year, which is great for everyone.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
The most rewarding aspect is seeing your ideas and designs come to life in the software. It can all start from one small idea or thought that ends up getting molded and sculpted into a completely interactive and entertaining experience. There is no better feeling in our profession than pouring your heart and soul into creating something and then watching others finding so much enjoyment from it. Consumer happiness is the ultimate reward in our profession.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
My biggest pet peeve is someone telling me that "it can't be done." I find it to be such a cop-out to make that statement. The easy way out of a problem is to declare that there is no solution. Creative problem-solving is a life skill. We face difficult problems every day at work and in life. The approach I take is to find the true source of the problem and then evaluate all possible options that we can take to fix it or get around it. Nine times out of ten, we find a way to solve the problem. Some people can be too quick to take the path of least resistance, and a lot of time that kills innovation.

> *"My biggest pet peeve is someone telling me that 'it can't be done.' I find it to be such a cop-out ..."*

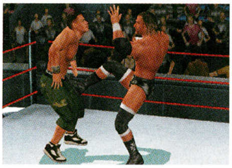
What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
I have tremendous respect for the game creators who have paved the way for the success of our industry today. Shigeru Miyamoto's work speaks for itself. He is associated with some of the greatest and most influential franchises and video game characters of all time.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I'm not much of a reader, but I do enjoy watching movies, and as of late I have enjoyed the work of Aaron Sorkin, Joss Whedon, Christopher Nolan, and David Fincher.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
Besides playing video games, I'm an avid sports fan. I love basketball, football, and baseball. I love to play them and watch the professionals play them at a high level. I also enjoy playing board games.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
When I was very young, I used to watch this show called *Out of This World*. The girl on the show had a superpower where she could stop and start time whenever she wanted. Besides having a major childhood crush on the actress in the show—Maureen Flannigan, who played Evie—I always thought that was such a cool superpower. That would come in so handy to be able to never have to worry about time running out. Plus, I'm sure this superpower could get me in a lot of trouble, which is always fun too.

GAMEOGRAPHY



WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008
Wii, 2007
SENIOR CREATIVE MANAGER

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2010
Wii, 2009
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

WWE ALL STARS
NINTENDO 3DS, 2011
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

WWE '12
Wii, 2011
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

You might know **Joshua**. He loves video games, and he owns enough to know they're not all meant for kids. That's why he reminds his friends (at least the ones that have kids) that they all have **big black letters on the box** to help parents find the ones that are best for their families.

You can learn about those ratings at **ESRB.org**

Los Angeles, CA

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RATING BOARD

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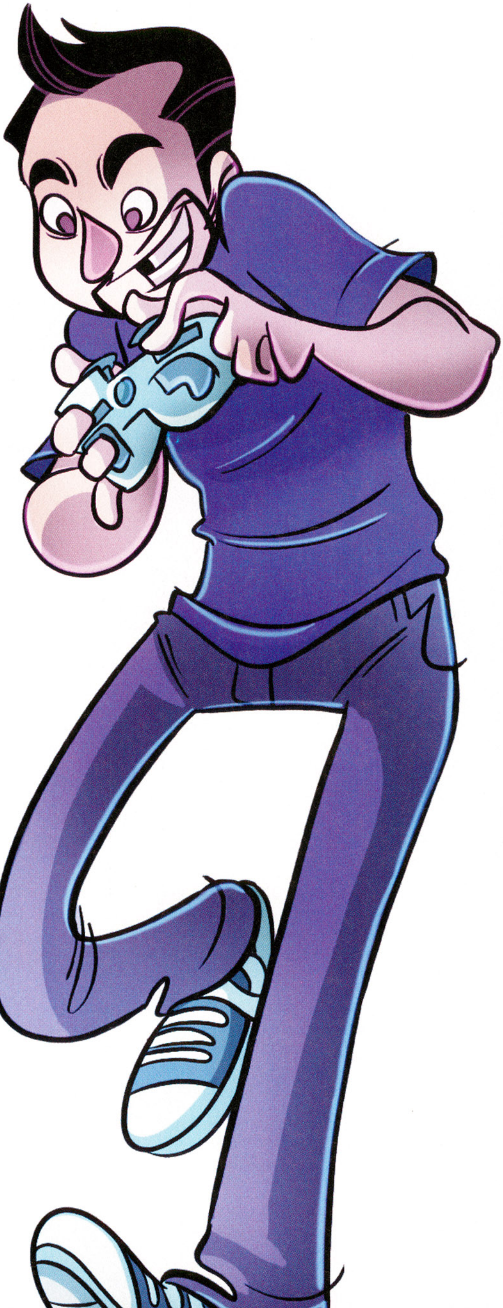
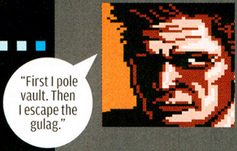
EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

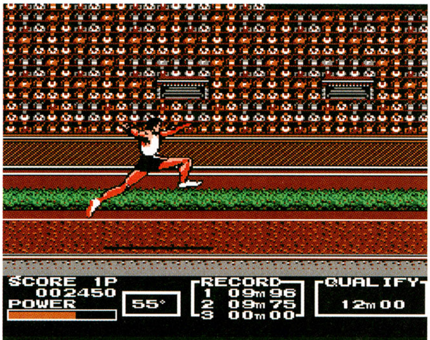



"First I pole vault. Then I escape the gulag."

KONAMI
TRACK & FIELD II
Nintendo Entertainment System
REV-A

Track & Field II

It's time to put your finger strength to the test.

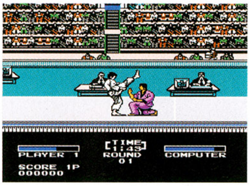


Will you feel the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat? It all depends on your skill...and how fast you can pound the A Button.

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**
RELEASE DATE: **JUNE 1989**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **3, 4**
DISTANCE (IN METERS) REQUIRED TO WIN A MEDAL IN TRIPLE JUMP: **17**

By the time this article sees print the 2012 Olympics will be over, but the appeal of the international athletic competition will remain timeless. Appropriately enough, the same can be said of Konami's Track & Field II, an Olympics-inspired sports title that left players cheering during the heyday of the NES.

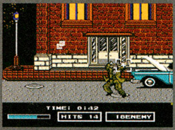
Though not carrying the Olympic license, Track & Field II conveyed the spirit of those games wholeheartedly. Not only did the product feature a lengthy Olympic mode that came complete with opening and closing ceremonies, but you could select your team from 10 different countries. Naturally, the game allowed you to compete in numerous types of sporting events, and not all of them were limited to track and field—you could participate in pole vaulting, triple jump, hammer throw, canoeing, horizontal bar, clay-pigeon shooting, freestyle swimming, tae kwon do, archery, and more.



Like in modern sports-compilation titles, each event featured unique controls tailored to the event at hand. In the hammer throw, for example, you rotated the Control Pad to build up power and held down the A Button to throw at the desired angle, while in tae kwon do you moved your character with the Control Pad and punched and kicked with A and B. In several events it was crucial to rapidly mash the A Button to build up your power—not a problem for those with amazing finger speed (or a turbo-enhanced controller such as the NES Max), but a huge challenge for many. If you had the strength, skill, and timing, however, there was a lot of fun to be had, whether you were leaping over hurdles, paddling through gates, or trying to execute a perfect dismount.

Furthermore, the game's presentation was amazing for its time. Characters were often large and conveyed a tremendous sense of realism, and each event featured its own custom artwork. The sound was great, too, boasting digitized voice clips (an extreme rarity on 8-bit hardware) and incredibly catchy music. Although the series continued past this installment, Track & Field II is arguably the highlight of the franchise, as well as one of the best sports games on the NES. —**CHRIS H.**

READY, AIM, FIRE!



In addition to the typical athletic contests featured in Track & Field II, the game contained two exhibition events that could be played only after a successful day of competition: hang-gliding and gun-firing. Hang-gliding seemed reasonable enough, but the gun-firing mode was a first-person shooting game in which you laid waste to an onslaught of gangsters. Don't expect this to become an official Olympic event any time soon.

NINTENDO POWER
Track & Field II
Captain Nintendo
Nintendo

FLEET FEET

Sports games don't appear on the cover of Nintendo Power very often, but Track & Field II was given the honor in our third issue. Strangely, the cover didn't show any athletes—instead, the image was of some magically floating high-tops shooting jets of flame. In retrospect, it might not have been the best cover choice.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. nintendopower@futureus.com

This is **Richard**. He knows it's his job to teach his son **Scotty** what this whole gaming thing is about. The age rating helps him **pick the right games**, but being a good dad means he always wants to know more.

That's exactly what the **ESRB's rating summaries** are for.

Search for a game's rating summary at **ESRB.org**.

Rich H.
Lafayette, IN

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EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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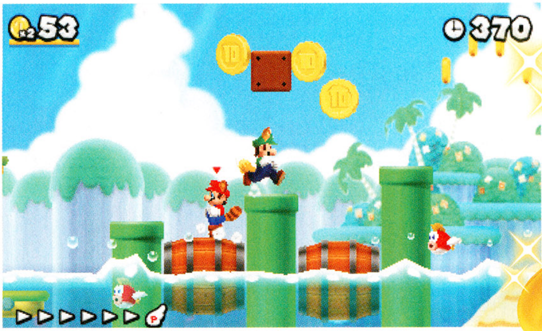
IN THIS SECTION

NINTENDO 3DS
NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2 pg.86

Wii
KIRBY'S DREAM COLLECTION: SPECIAL EDITION pg.88

Mario and Luigi know that when you get the money, you get the power. Then when you get the power, you get the princess. Help the brothers achieve their lofty goal in New Super Mario Bros. 2 for Nintendo 3DS.



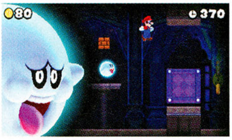
The Midas Touch

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

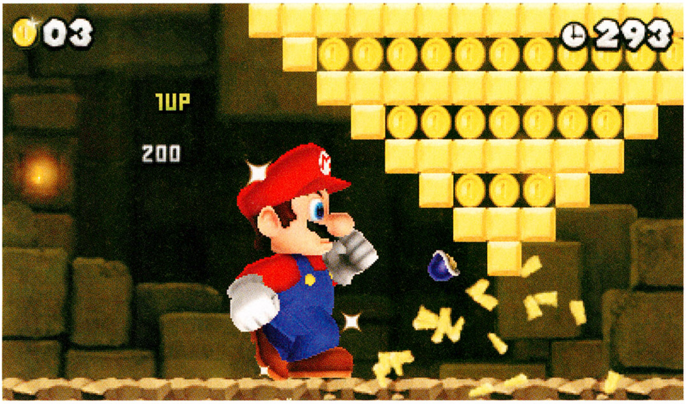
8.5 All of the hallmarks that make Mario's platformers such a joy to play are present in New Super Mario Bros. 2. The controls are incredibly precise, the soundtrack is suitably catchy, and the graphics look fantastic. Even though the 3D effect isn't integral to the gameplay, the visual depth it gives to the Mushroom Kingdom is quite enjoyable. Perhaps most importantly, the level design is outstanding. Each stage is filled with hidden blocks, pipes leading to underground rooms, and plenty of other secrets. There's a good variety of stages, as well: You'll find yourself being chased by a massive Boo, dodging giant boulders underwater, and getting lost in mazelike Ghost Houses. One exceptionally fun bit has Mario running from the Koopalings, who are in a flying clown car that periodically emits a flash of light to freeze Mario in his tracks unless he is hiding behind a wall.

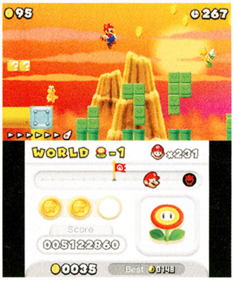
The dominant new feature in NSMB2 is its abundance of gold coins. These collectible treasures have been a mainstay of the Mario series since the beginning, but this title allows you to snag hundreds of thousands of them (and yes, the game keeps track of your total). The idea may seem gimmicky, and to be honest, it kinda is. But it's also loads of fun. There is a tangible rush when activating an item that triggers a cascade of cash. Whether it's a Gold Ring that turns enemies gold and causes them to drop coins as they move, a Gold Block that Mario wears on his head and that spits out more coins the faster he runs, or—best of all—a Gold Flower that grants Mario exploding fireballs that reduce enemies and blocks to piles of coins, there are ample ways to add jingle to your pockets.

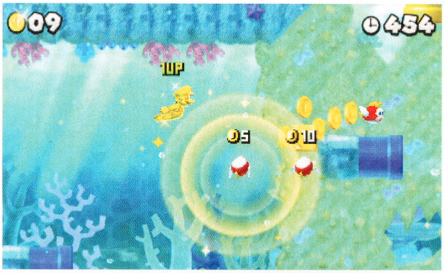
The downside of the plenitude is that it renders money a whole lot less valuable. Whereas in previous Mario titles you might go out of your way to find every coin in pursuit of the 1-up earned for collecting 100 of them, there's so much lucre here that it's often easier to just turn a blind eye and finish a stage. Without even thinking about it, you'll quickly

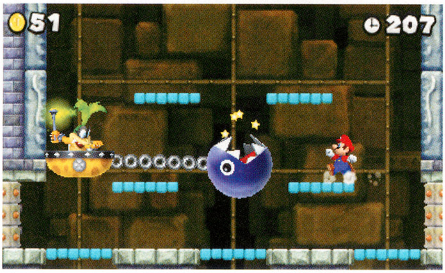


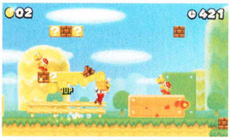
[Above] This giant Boo doesn't always hide his eyes when Mario looks at him.











have dozens of extra lives in reserve due to the sheer quantity of coins you'll stumble across as you move through a level. Aside from making the game easier due to the near-unlimited lives at your disposal, the influx of ducats takes some of the excitement out of hunting for secrets. You might be awfully proud of yourself for tracking down a well-hidden passage, but when you find that it's just filled with more coins, the effort seems less worthwhile.

However, three Star Coins are located within each level. These trinkets open up pathways to new levels, and some of them are deviously hidden in hard-to-reach areas. Scouring each stage looking for them returns a lot of the challenge that is lost due to the abundance of extra lives.

Another challenge can be found in the game's Coin Rush mode. Here you have a limited amount of time to run through stages collecting as much change as you can. New levels for this mode are unlocked as you play through the main game, adding to the variety. Furthermore, Coin Rush records can be swapped via StreetPass, allowing players to share (and attempt to beat) each other's scores.

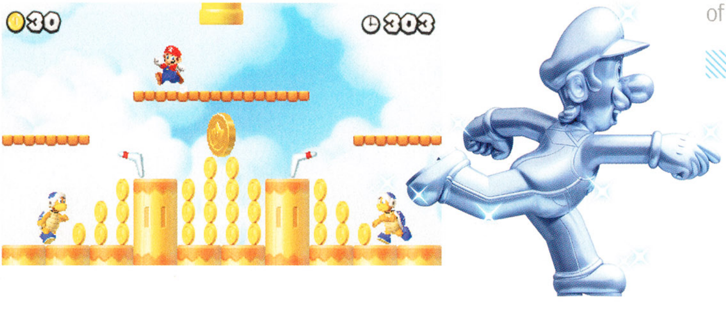
Those looking for a more personal multiplayer experience will be pleased to know that New Super Mario Bros. 2 features two-player simultaneous action. The co-op mode functions much like the one in New Super Mario Bros. Wii. Although it's certainly entertaining to see Mario and Luigi jumping around the screen at the same time, far too often the two players get in each other's way, leading to unnecessary frustration. Plus, the game's camera follows one player at a time (determined by various factors), making it possible for the other player to be left behind. This setup may be understandable in a console game where everyone shares the same physical screen, but it feels out of place on a portable system that affords each player his own view of the action. Even so, the multiplayer performs well, with no lag between systems—certainly an important requirement for a fast-paced platformer.

New Super Mario Bros. 2 may not feel as fresh as last year's Super Mario 3D Land, but there's no denying that it's a terrific Mario title, and one of the best of its genre on N3DS. There are some very clever sequences, and the coin-collection mechanic is surprisingly enjoyable even if it does foster a bit of gameplay imbalance. —**PHIL T.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Eliminate the Middleman

New Super Mario Bros. 2 is the only first-party title to date to be released simultaneously in retail stores and in the Nintendo eShop. It's available now, and as an incentive, Nintendo is offering Club Nintendo members double the Club's coins for downloading the title through the eShop. Just make sure your N3DS is linked to your Club Nintendo account prior to purchase, and download the game by September 20. Then take the registration survey on the Club Nintendo website within four weeks to earn 100 coins instead of the standard 50.



WRITERS' BLOCK

ACCORDING TO YOUR ACTIVITY LOG, WHAT IS YOUR MOST-PLAYED NINTENDO 3DS GAME?

JUSTIN CHENG

Well, my most-played *software* is StreetPass Mii Plaza, but as far as *games* are concerned, it's Super Mario 3D Land.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

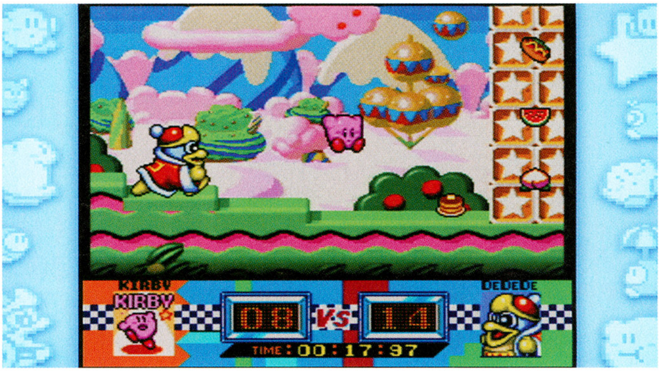
Not counting StreetPass Mii Plaza, it's the Virtual Console version of Mario's Picross. I can play that one over and over.

PHIL THEOBALD

Between all of the unlockable characters and vehicle parts (not to mention multiplayer races here in the office), I've spent the most time with Mario Kart 7. And I still don't have those darn gold parts!

STEVE THOMASON

Evidently I love me some Square Enix games on the N3DS. I've spent 30-plus hours on Kingdom Hearts 3D and just over 23 hours on Theatrhythm Final Fantasy.



Sweet Dreams

KIRBY'S DREAM COLLECTION: SPECIAL EDITION

8.5

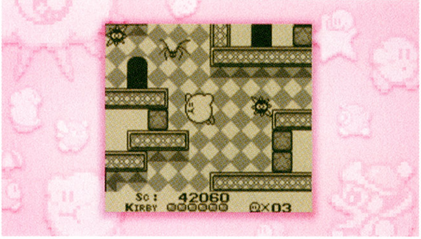
I've been a fan of Nintendo's pink puffball for a long time now (20 years, as it turns out, which makes me feel really old), and Kirby's Dream Collection is a wonderful reminder of what drew me to the series in the first place. Kirby's Dream Land, Kirby's Adventure, Kirby's Dream Land 2, Kirby's Super Star, Kirby's Dream Land 3, and Kirby 64: The Crystal Shards—there's not a weak title in the bunch.

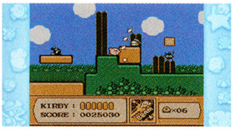
Granted, you may already own most if not all of these games in some form or another. Fortunately, this package has a lot more to offer, such as a book filled with Kirby pictures and facts, a soundtrack CD, a timeline in which you can view factoids and trailers of the Kirby games not included in this collection, and three episodes from the *Kirby: Right Back at Ya!* cartoon. (Full disclosure: a gallery of Nintendo Power's Kirby covers is also included, but that had no influence on this review.) Plus, there are the Kirby's Return to Dream Land-style New Challenge Stages, wherein you must race through a level with only one power at your disposal. Unlike the on-the-easier-side-of-the-difficulty-spectrum main titles in Kirby's Dream Collection, these stages can be very, well, *challenging*—especially if you're trying to earn gold medals—but they're enjoyable overall.

Kirby's Dream Collection isn't flawless, of course. It's a shame that there isn't an easier way to switch between titles once you've started playing besides going into the Wii Home menu and resetting the game. Furthermore, it would've been nice to see some tweaks made to a couple of the titles. I wish the slowdown issues in Kirby's Adventure had been ironed out, for instance. (I know the slowdown was present in the original NES game, but still....) And I wish there were a way to experience the Super Game Boy enhancements in this version of Kirby's Dream Land 2.

Ultimately, though, these are nitpicks. Kirby's Dream Collection: Special Edition is a fantastic celebration of 20 years of the pink protagonist. And considering everything that's included in this compilation, it's a great value-for-dollar proposition. Buy it. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **HAL LABORATORY**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**





For **Juri**, the big letter on the box is a good start. But sometimes she wants to know more about the games **Sean** and **Maia** want to play. And now she can, **right from her phone**, right from the store.

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Juri P
Lakeside, CA

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EARLY CHILDHOOD eC CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

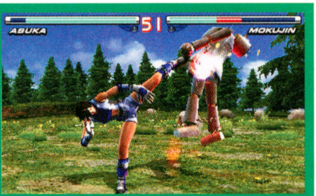
Nintendo 3DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy	7.5	Namco Bandai	273	T
The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	T
Bit.Trip Saga	8.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.0	Sega	273	T
Cave Story 3D	8.0	NIS America	273	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	5.0	Majesco	273	E
Crush 3D	7.0	Sega	275	E10+
Deca Sports Extreme	5.0	Konami	271	E
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	6.5	Konami	272	E10+
Driver Renegade	3.0	Ubisoft	271	M
Face Racers: Photo Finish	4.0	Majesco	271	E
FIFA Soccer 12	7.0	EA Sports	272	E
Frogger 3D	6.5	Konami	271	E
Funky Barn 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	276	E
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	5.5	Natsume	271	E
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	7.5	Natsume	272	E
Heroes of Ruin	7.0	Square Enix	280	T
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	5.0	Ubisoft	273	T
Kid Icarus: Uprising	9.5	Nintendo	277	E10+
Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance	8.0	Square Enix	281	E10+
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	7.0	Warner Bros.	280	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	275	E
Mario Kart 7	9.0	Nintendo	274	E
Mario Tennis Open	7.0	Nintendo	278	E
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	9.0	Konami	276	M
Michael Jackson: The Experience	5.0	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Nano Assault	7.0	Majesco	273	E10+
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle	6.0	Konami	272	E
Order Up!!	6.5	UTV Ignition	275	E
Pac-Man Party 3D	4.5	Namco Bandai	273	E
Pet Zombies	5.5	Majesco	272	T
Pokémon Rumble Blast	7.5	Nintendo	273	E
Rayman Origins	8.5	Ubisoft	279	E10+
Resident Evil: Revelations	9.0	Capcom	275	M
Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure	8.0	Sega	280	E10+
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	5.5	Atari	278	E
Shifting World	6.5	Aksys	277	E
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	9.0	Atlus	271	T
Shinobi	7.5	Sega	273	T
The Sims 3 Pets	7.5	Electronic Arts	273	T
Sonic Generations	8.0	Sega	274	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	6.0	Activision	273	T
Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir	7.0	Nintendo	277	T
Star Fox 64 3D	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Super Mario 3D Land	9.0	Nintendo	273	E
Tales of the Abyss	7.0	Namco Bandai	275	T
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	7.5	Namco Bandai	276	T
Tetris Axis	7.5	Nintendo	272	E
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy	8.0	Square Enix	280	E10+
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	272	T
WWE All Stars	7.5	THQ	274	T

MORE ON:

TEKKEN 3D PRIME EDITION

Tekken 3D looks amazing and offers tons of tactical depth, but the lack of modes is criminal; you don't even get an ending for beating the game. The developers have attempted to alleviate this with the inclusion of the full-length *Tekken: Blood Vengeance* CG movie, but it's not exactly Oscar-winning material. Again, it's visually spectacular, but the new central character is an unlikeable jerk, and the story is a nonsensical mess that basically serves as an excuse for an awesome Heihachi vs. Kazuya vs. Jin fight at the end. —CHRIS H.

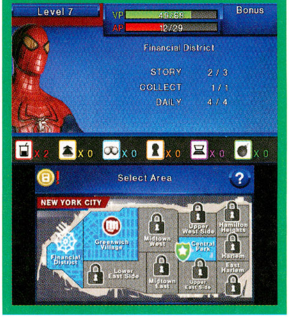


MORE ON:

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

Despite the fact that The Amazing Spider-Man got a middling review in this fine publication, I still had an urge to play the game after seeing the film. (It's a good thing I waited till after the movie to play it, too, because there are spoilers galore in this title.) The main game is just as mediocre as our review said it was, but I found myself strangely compelled to come back to the free-to-play-style Vigilante mode nearly every day. I'm not saying it's great, but the Vigilante mode is a decent way to kill a little time.

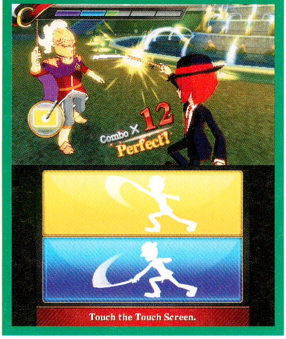
—JUSTIN C.



MORE ON:

RHYTHM THIEF & THE EMPEROR'S TREASURE

I always enjoy a good story-driven rhythm game, and Rhythm Thief is loads of fun. With its cast of charming characters and bizarre plot (which involves a resurrected Napoleon trying to take over Paris), the game feels like a combination of Professor Layton, Tintin, Lupin the 3rd, and Space Channel 5. The wide variety of musical minigames keeps the game from getting repetitive, and the tunes are extremely catchy. You also can't go wrong with the occasional nods to Samba de Amigo. —PHIL T.



Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
The Adventures of Tintin: The Game	5.5	Ubisoft	275	E10+
The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	T
Back to the Future: The Game	6.5	Telltale	273	T
Bit.Trip Complete	9.0	Aksys	271	E
Brave: The Video Game	5.0	Disney	280	E10+
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion XL	6.0	Crave	274	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Disney Universe	4.5	Disney	273	E10+
Driver San Francisco	4.5	Ubisoft	271	T
Epic Mickey	8.5	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 12	8.0	EA Sports	272	E
Fishing Resort	7.5	Xseed	273	E
Fortune Street	7.5	Nintendo	274	E
Go Vacation	7.0	Namco Bandai	273	E10+
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
The Last Story	9.0	Xseed	281	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	9.5	Nintendo	274	E10+
Lost In Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 12	7.0	Electronic Arts	271	E
Major League Baseball 2K12	2.5	2K Sports	277	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	273	E
Mario Party 9	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond	5.5	Nintendo	276	E
Rayman Origins	9.5	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Rhythm Heaven Fever	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	8.0	Natsume	272	E10+
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	7.0	Activision	273	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	7.0	Activision	273	T
Super Mario All-Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
TRON: Evolution–Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE '12	6.5	THQ	274	T
X-Men Destiny	2.5	Activision	273	T
Xenoblade Chronicles	9.0	Nintendo	277	T

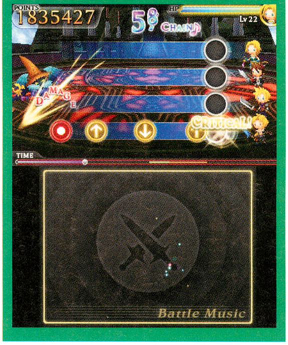
Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Aliens: Infestation	8.0	Sega	272	T
The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	E10+
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Bejeweled 3	8.5	PopCap	274	E
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	5.0	Majesco	271	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	7.5	Nintendo	271	E
Fossil Fighters: Champions	8.0	Nintendo	273	E
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	9.0	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Destineer	265	E
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	8.0	Natsume	272	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	8.0	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kirby Mass Attack	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Conquest	9.0	Nintendo	279	E
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	8.0	Atlus	276	T
Solatorobo: Red the Hunter	9.0	Xseed	271	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	5.0	Activision	273	E10+
TRON: Evolution	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
X-Men Destiny	2.0	Activision	273	E10+

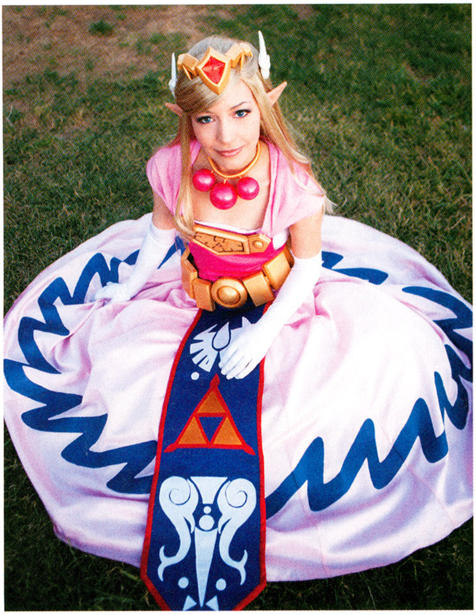
MORE ON:

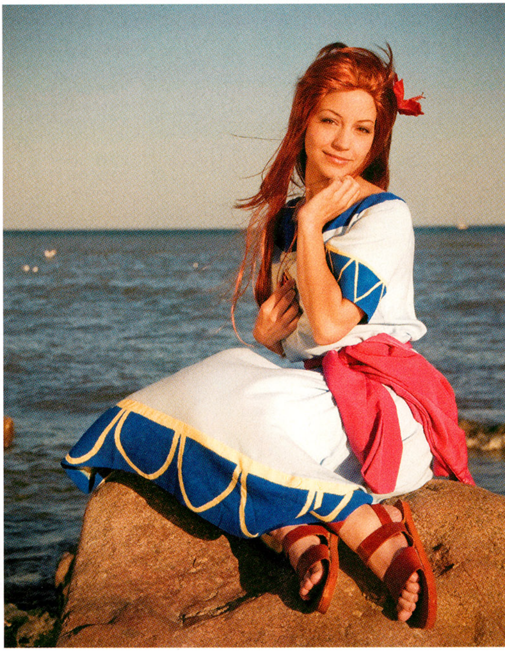
THEATRHYTHM FINAL FANTASY

I am absolutely hooked on Theatrhythm, having put more than 20 hours into the game already. I very much doubt that it would hold the same appeal for someone who wasn't a long-time Final Fantasy aficionado, but for those of us who remember fondly the exploits of Terra, Squall, Zidane, Tidus, and the rest, this is one of the most compelling rhythm games out there. Of course, it also doesn't hurt that Final Fantasy has had some of the best music in the history of the medium. —STEVE T.



COMMUNITY





COSPLAY

Fantasy Turned Reality

A reader's love for The Legend of Zelda yields tremendous cosplay results.

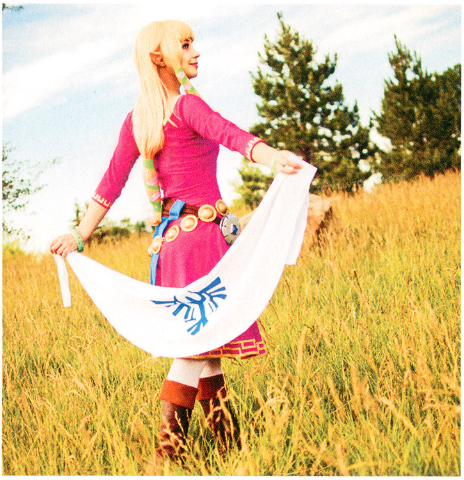
PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: LEONARD LEE; (2) ARIELLE STROMBERG; GENIA BAIDA

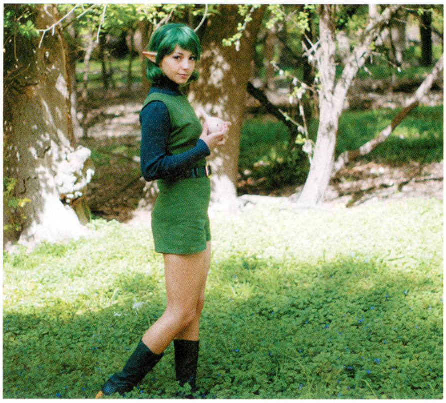
MICHELLE MORSE'S immense skill for designing stunning costumes inspired by The Legend of Zelda has been chronicled in these pages before (see Vol. 259), but the 26-year-old music student didn't stop with her interpretations of the titular heroine's apparel from The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess and Zelda II: The Adventures of Link.

As seen in these fantastic photos, the Madison, Wisconsin, resident has kept awfully busy over the last couple of years, designing a bevy of beautiful cosplay ensembles based on the franchise. Pictured here are her takes on Toon Zelda from The Wind Waker, Marin from Link's Awakening, Skyloft Zelda from Skyward Sword, and Saria from Ocarina of Time. Each features Morse's deft touch at bringing characters to life with pitch-perfect costume design, makeup, and poses.

Morse praises Skyloft Zelda as one of her favorite incarnations of the character, calling her "super adorable, graceful, and brave." Morse pursues each project for distinct reasons, but ultimately each familiar heroine she mimics is inspired by her own affection for the subject. Saria, for instance, was meant to be part of a cosplay group with other Kokiri children, but when that plan fell through she continued the work on her own. "It all comes down to my love of the characters," she explains. "Even when a design isn't attractive to me, if I love the character enough, the design will grow on me."

Each costume proves to be a labor of love, with a strong emphasis on the labor. The Toon Zelda





costume required plenty of casa satin, some of which was appliquéd or detailed with fabric paint. Even the accessories required loads of work: the barrettes are made from epoxy-coated sculpting clay, while the necklace utilizes "sealed craft foam with two ping-pong balls and a Christmas ornament for beads," she says. Toon Zelda and the Saria and Marin costumes cost between $80 and $100 each for materials.

It's the Skyward Sword costume that required the heftiest investment, however—about $350 on materials across two months of work. With fuchsia-dyed Italian wool for the dress, hand-crocheted fringe, and custom boots that were stained, sewed, and glued onto shoe soles, it's clear that Morse went above and beyond to represent one of her favorite versions of Zelda.

And she's not done. She's currently working on Zelda from Ocarina of Time, as well as a couple of characters from role-playing games on other platforms, though her ideal project is still waiting in the wings. "My dream non-Zelda costume is Palutena from Kid Icarus: Uprising," she notes. "I've wanted to make that costume since I first saw her appear in Super Smash Bros. Brawl!" —**ANDREW H.**

TAKE *your best* SHOT

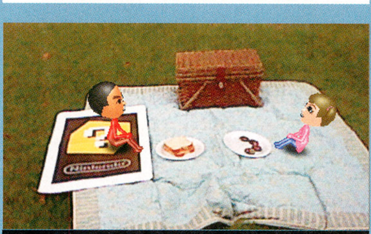
PHOTO CHALLENGE

SEND YOUR PICS TO photos@nintendopower.com.

Use your Nintendo DSi or Nintendo 3DS system to snap a fun, gaming-related photo that matches this month's theme, then transfer the image to a computer using an SD card reader and e-mail it to the above address. We'll print the best ones.

THIS MONTH'S THEME: BACK TO SCHOOL

VOLUME 280'S THEME: SUNNY DAYS



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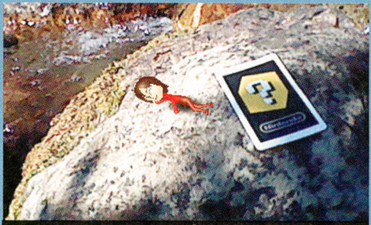

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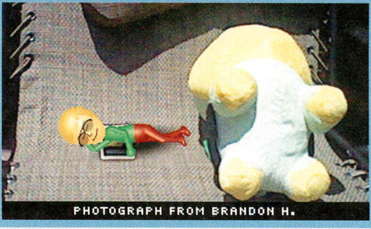

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It's a testament to Chrono Trigger's greatness that the game can continue to inspire artists.

FANDOM

Little Lucca

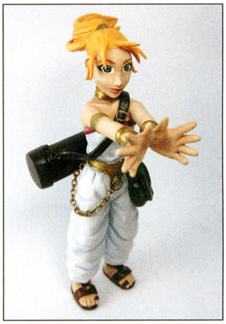
A miniature homage to Chrono Trigger

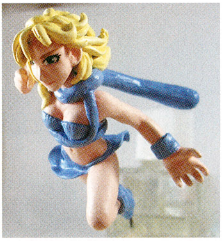
SOMETIMES being the brains of a group is what makes a character endearing. Lucca Ashtear, the spectacled inventor from the wildly popular Super NES RPG Chrono Trigger, has had her share of fans over the years, but it seems her biggest is Tamara Bostan of Manchester, Connecticut.

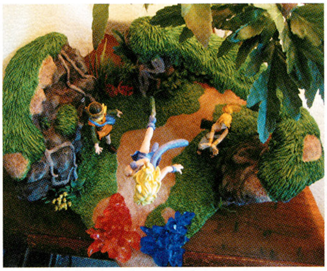
Bostan has been sculpting since she took pottery classes in high school in 2007, and she figured, "if I'm gonna learn to sculpt, I might as well start with something I like," so she began with Kirby and Yoshi crafts. Her most recent sculpture is easily one of her most impressive, though: a three-inch figure of Lucca, made of copper-wire armature, polymer clay, acrylic paints, and epoxy putty. It's slightly bigger than your thumb.

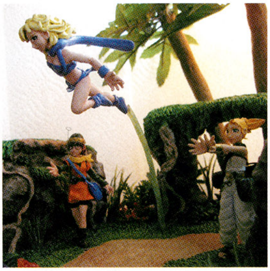
"I wanted to see if I could make a well-known character in that style and still keep her well-done and recognizable," explains Bostan. "I decided to make the Lucca figure so small as a challenge for myself."

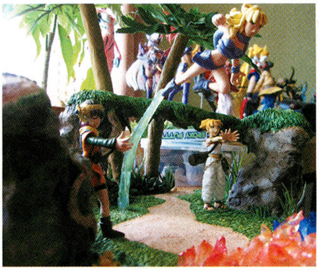
That challenge isn't nearly done, as it turns out. The Lucca figure is part of a diorama—Bostan has already made Ayla and Marle figures to go with it. "They [are] in 65,000,000 B.C., in a jungle area. Ayla [is] in midair ready to fight. Marle and Lucca [are] casting Antipode.... I wanted to make something a little over-the-top for my figures this time." **—DAVID W.**

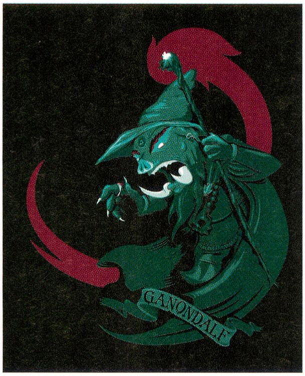


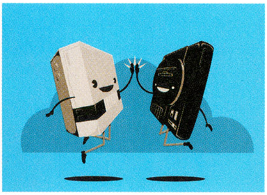


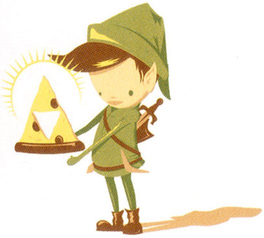












FANDOM

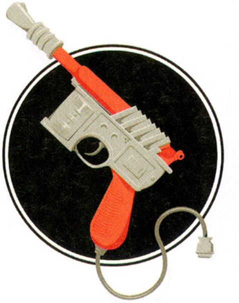
NES to Impress

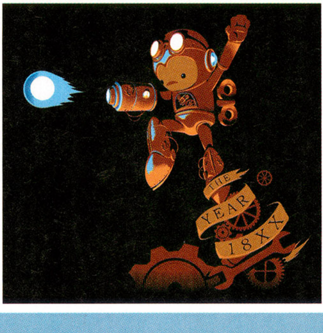
8-bit classics and the NES console itself are the inspiration for this art teacher's pretty pictures.

ROGER VON BIERSBORN is a 29-year-old graphic-arts teacher who cut his teeth on the original NES. Although far more detailed than their 8-bit source material, his drawings pay tribute to what he calls the "concentrated awesome" of the heroes from that bygone era, as well as the hardware that was able to convey, as he puts it, "characters and worlds that were super rich and intriguing, even if they were represented by a handful of pixels."

Biersborn says Final Fantasy artist Yoshitaka Amano has been a big inspiration: "The art he's done for the Final Fantasy series is amazing. His style is so distinct and memorable." He adds that Final Fantasy III for the Super NES is his favorite game artistically, saying, "Everything in that game looked awesome, and the art in the manual just made it that much cooler."

If he had to choose a classic series to reinvent the look of, though, it'd be Zelda. "I can't think of anything more rewarding than being able to add my own interpretation of an Octorok or a Lakitu into the evolution of those games. That's a lot of pressure, too, though," he admits. "What if I go down in history as the guy that ruined Link by giving him a cheeseburger on his head instead of a green cap? I can't really imagine anyone complaining, though; cheeseburgers are delicious." **—RANDY N.**

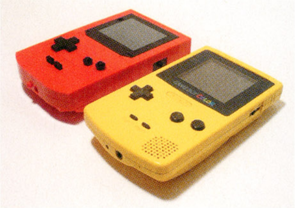




FANDOM

Brilliantly Bricked

Crazy LEGO consoles look close to the real thing.



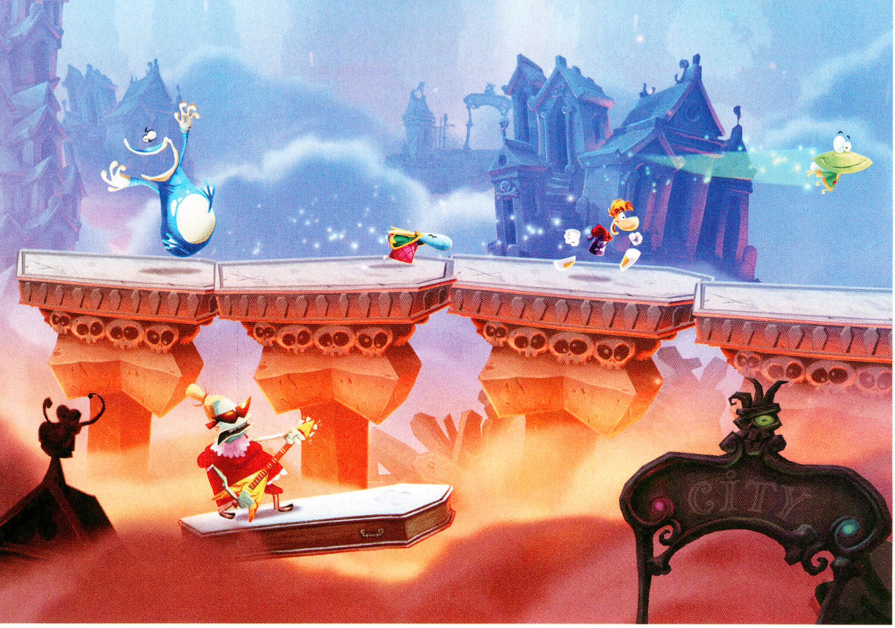
WHEN PLACED side-by-side with the real thing, it's hard to tell that Davis French's painstakingly crafted Game Boy Color replica is made of LEGOs—at least without taking a closer look. Pouring the same level of intense effort into all of his many gaming-themed constructs, this 15-year-old LEGO addict from Kentucky certainly has a sharp eye for detail, and some serious plastic-brick-laying skills to back it up. Nintendo consoles are a favorite subject for the avid gamer-turned-builder.

"I got into building LEGOs early on, since there were always a lot of LEGO and DUPLO [blocks] around my house," French explains. "The first time I ever built something vaguely Nintendo-related was when my parents wouldn't buy me or my brother a Game Boy Color, so I tried building one. Needless to say, it wasn't as good as my current GBC model, but I was young, so it was good enough for me."

Thankfully, he didn't stop there. French's most recent project, a jet-black LEGO Nintendo 3DS system, is just the latest in a series of ultra-realistic gaming systems he's pieced together over the years. From an amazing-looking Super NES complete with a power adapter made with LEGO blocks to an AR Card that actually works with a real N3DS, his output is impressively fine-tuned for maximum realism.

"Accuracy in scale and level of detail is super important to me, because I think all those little details are what make these creations recognizable," notes French. "Getting all those details into each creation is the hardest part, but it's also the most fun part. I like building in this scale, because it's challenging and the final product looks cool."

For his next projects, French hopes to tackle the original Game Boy and his personal favorite, the Nintendo 64, in LEGO form. We can't wait! **—NATHAN M.**



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NEXT MONTH

We'll be turning the Wii U hype dial to 11 with exclusive, in-depth looks at some of the platform's most hotly anticipated titles, including Rayman Legends and ZombiU. We've also got a few cool surprises up our sleeves. This is one issue you definitely will not want to miss!

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